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The Story of Ruth: A Chronological and Genealogical Perspective

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In an earlier study, I have attempted a reconstruction of the chronology of the period of the Judges.[1] Here, I would like to extend that study by concentrating on the chronology of the Book of Ruth. Since the story of this ancestor of King David occurred during the days of the Judges (Ruth 1:1) it is necessary to try and locate it within that time frame.

The story has been assigned to various places within the period of the Judges. Josephus[2] located it at the time of Eli. The early Rabbis also made suggestions. According to Rab, Barak and Deborah were implied by the word judges in the first verse of the book. To Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, they were Shamgar and Ehud; and to Rabbi Huna, they were Deborah, Barak and Jael, since to him the word "judge" implied one, "judges" two, and "the judges" three.[3] Another tradition identifies Boaz with the judge Ibzan,[4] since both were from Bethlehem. Modern commentators usually make no attempt at a precise chronology since the opening phrase of the book rather loosely assigns the story to the period of the Judges.[5]

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[1] Paul Ray, "Another Look at the Period of the Judges," in *Beyond the Jordan*: *Studies in Honor of W. Harold Mare*, ed. G. A. Carnagey, G. A. Carnagey, Jr. and K. N. Schoville (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 93-104.

[2] Josephus, *Antiquities* 5. 9.2. Probably on the basis of the position of the book in the LXX.

[3] *Ruth Rab*. 1.1.

[4] *b. B. Bat*. 91a.

[5] Leon Morris, *Ruth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968), 245.

Time and Location of the Sojourn

The location of the sojourn is a factor which is sometimes seen as having chronological implications. The destruction of the crops during the Midianite oppression has been connected with the famine of Ruth.[6] However, since the Midianites were a nomadic people this crop destruction was most likely seasonal, i.e., a series of raids when the crops came to fruition at harvest time, rather than by their constant presence in the region.[7] The crop loss probably consisted of consumption of part of the harvest and destruction of what could not be carried away. The famine of Ruth suggests a drought[8] rather than one due to a politically adverse situation.

If the famine of Ruth was a local drought, something which was not uncommon in this part of the world (cf. Amos 4:7),[9] the tribal territory of Judah may have been affected, while neighboring areas, even east in Transjordan, received normal amounts of precipitation. The question remains as to why Moab was chosen as a place to sojourn (*lāgûr*; cf. Ruth 1:1). Given the fact that Moab is mentioned in the text, it would seem reasonable that the sojourn described here occurred during some ten year period (Ruth 1:4) during the 18-year Moabite oppression (Judg 3:14; ca. 1321-1303 B.C., according to our earlier reconstruction).[10] The Moabites, together with the Ammonites and the Amalekites (Judg 3:12-13) had taken over at least some of the land belonging to the Transjordan tribes of Reuben and Gad, and had also crossed the Jordan River into the central hill country areas inhabited by the tribes of Benjamin and Ephraim (Judg 3:15, 27). They had even taken possession of Jericho, the city of the palm trees (Judg 3:13; cf. Deut 34:3).[11]

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[6] Carl Fredrick Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth and 1 & 2 Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982) 2.466, 470-71.

[7] William H. Shea, *Famines in the Early History of Egypt and Syro-Palestine* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1976), 232.

[8] E. F. Campbell, *Ruth* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 59.

[9] Denis Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, rev. ed. (NY: Harper and Row, 1974), 71-76.

[10] cf. Ray, "Judges," 99, Table 1. There are no textual variants for the figure of 10 years in the ancient versions.

[11] Though some have argued that Eglon's actual residence may have been on the Transjordan side of the Jordan River; cf. G. F. Moore, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1895), 100-101.

The location of the sojourn in this setting is literally "the fields" of Moab (Ruth 1:1). Although fields (*śᵉdê*), the noun used with Moab, is a synonym of land (*ʾereṣ*),[12] it is usually localized to a specific portion of land. If Moab was in control of Israelite territory in Transjordan at the time of this sojourn, the term *śᵉdê*, here (and in vv. 2, 6a, 22) could refer to Moab Proper (the land of Moab), which is relatively isolated and basically pastoral land;[13] the Mishor, the land north of the River Arnon, which is very fertile, and in terms of climate, similar to the area around Bethlehem,[14] or less likely, the Plains of Moab, which is part of the Jordan rift valley, across from Jericho, and rather arid[15] due to its location in the rain shadow.

Egypt was the normal place to go when widespread famine occurred in Palestine, but as mentioned above, this famine was probably local. Therefore, a location with a climate similar to their own land (*ʾereṣ*; cf. Ruth 1:1a) might seem preferable. If the above locations were indeed available, it seems unlikely that Elimelek and his family chose to sojourn in Moab Proper, which although it potentially receives 300-400 mm of rainfall annually, the amount is actually unpredictable[16] due to its more southern location. If this supposition is correct, it seems probable that they obtained permission from the Moabites to sojourn in a territory (*śᵉdê*, cf. 1:6b, 2:6, 4:3) of which they were now in control, just across the Jordan River, in the Mishor. This is indicative given the legal implications of the word "sojourner" as one who comes under the protection of those who are

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[12] Robert B. Girdlestine, *Synonyms of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1897), 261. Interestingly, the term land (*ʾereṣ*) is used only three times in the book, two times referring to the land of Judah (Ruth 1:1, 7), of which Naomi and her family were native, and one time in the abstract, referring to the "land" where Ruth was born; i.e., her homeland (Ruth 2:11). However, the term land (*ʾereṣ*) of Moab, or Moab Proper is not found in the book.

[13] Burton MacDonald, *East of the Jordan: Territories and Sites of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2000), 174.

[14] Bethlehem is located in a climatic zone that receives 300-500 mm of rain per year. However, since it is on the eastern edge of the zone, it probably averages 300-400 mm. Climatically, the Mishor is similar to Cisjordan hill country (Baly, 54, 60), also receiving 300-400 mm of rain per year (Baly, 55; fig. 24; MacDonald, 32; fig. 4).

[15] Yohanan Aharoni, *Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (trans. by A. F. Rainey), Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 34.

[16] Baly, 54.

not his blood relatives.[17] And this would have been the only time in which Moab was in control of this region during the period of the Judges (cf. Judg 3:12-30, Ruth 1:4, 8). It is also the only time during this period when Israel served or became vassals to Moab (Judg 3:14).[18]

Evidence from the Genealogy of Ruth 4:18-22

It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the arguments for and against the genealogy at the end of the book as being part of the original text. It is usually considered a later appendix.[19] However, assuming it was part of the original text, it has possible chronological implications. Unfortunately, the genealogy seems to be incomplete, with several links missing in various places.[20] It will, therefore, be necessary to reconstruct the genealogy in order for it to have any chronological significance. This will be done by sifting through the biblical data on the period of time represented in the genealogy, as well as setting that data alongside recent research on genealogy and history.

The genealogy of Ruth 4:18-22 is linear. This type of genealogy traces one line of descent from a living individual to a single ancestor.[21] A later genealogy in 1 Chronicles 2:3-5, 9-15, to which there is close correspondence, though also linear, is part of a larger segmented genealogy, which traces more than one line of descent to a single ancestor.[22] Both types of genealogies exhibit fluidity,[23] omitting unimportant names, thus they seem incomplete to Westerners. In addition, as with modern oral

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[17] D. Kellermann, "gûr," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament,* ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 2:443.

[18] Walter C. Kaiser, "ʿābad," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason J. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago, Il: Moody Press, 1980), 2:639.

[19] Campbell, Appendix, 3; C. J. Goslinga, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 513, 517.

[20] Goslinga, 556.

[21] Robert R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 9.

[22] Wilson, "*Genealogy and History*," 9. On the literary structure of 1 Chronicles 2, cf. H. G. M. Williamson, "Sources and Redaction in the Chronicler's Genealogy of Judah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979): 351-359. On the correspondence between the genealogies of Ruth and 1 Chronicle 2, cf. Campbell, Appendix 4.

[23] Wilson, "Genealogy and History," 27-36; cf. also "Between 'Azel' and 'Azel': Interpreting the Biblical Genealogies," *Biblical Archaeologist* 42 (1979): 12.

genealogies where the average depth is ten to fourteen generations,[24] Ruth 4:18-22 exhibits ten generations and 1 Chr 2:3-15 eleven.

Judah

The genealogy of Ruth 4:18-22 begins with Perez instead of the lineage founder, Judah. However, there is enough information in the biblical text about most of the other family members included here to make it obvious that the genealogy is that of the tribe of Judah. The abbreviated form used here may have been produced in order to keep the genealogy at a depth of ten, although it is admittedly unusual to omit the founder of a lineage, thus making it a most peculiar one. The reference to the house (*bêt*) of Perez in the narrative (Ruth 4:12), is the most likely reason.[25]

If 1450 B.C. is used as the date of the Exodus,[26] one arrives at 1933 B.C.[27] as the year that Jacob went to Haran. Seven years later (1926 B.C.)

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[24] Wilson, "Genealogy and History," 20-22.

[25] Goslinga, 517, 555.

[26] William H. Shea, "Exodus, Date of the," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* rev.ed., ed. by Geoffery W. Bromley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 2:230-238.

[27] This date, and others that follow, are based on the following texts, with the year 1450 B.C. as the date of the Exodus (see above n. 26), in years B.C.:

970 Solomon begins building the Temple, 480 years after the Exodus (1 Kgs 6:1)

1450 The Exodus, 430 years after Jacob comes to Egypt (Exod 12:40)

1880 Jacob 130 years old when he came to Egypt (Gen 47:9)

1882 Famine already two years in progress before Joseph revealed himself (Gen 45:6)

1889 Joseph becomes Vizier at age 30, followed by seven plentiful years (Gen 41:46, 53-54)

1890 Isaac dies at 180 years of age (Gen 35:28)

1902 Joseph sold into slavery at 17 years of age (Gen 37:2)

1913 Jacob leaves Laban after 20 years of labor (Gen 31:38)

1919 Joseph born after Jacob works 14 years for Laban (Gen 29:27; 30:25-28)

1926 Jacob marries after working for Laban 7 years (Gen 29:18, 27)

1933 Jacob flees Canaan, goes to work for Laban (Gen 27:1-28:10, 29:18)

1995 Abraham dies at 175 years of age (Gen 25:7)

2010 Jacob and Esau born when Isaac was 60 years old (Gen 25:20, 26)

2070 Isaac born when Abraham is 100 years old (Gen 21:5)

2095 Abraham comes to Canaan at 75 years old (Gen 12:4)

2170 Abraham born (Gen 11:26, 32)

These dates are based on the long chronology for the sojourn in Egypt, cf. Paul Ray "The Duration of the Israelite Sojourn in Egypt," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 24 (1986): 231-248.

he married both Leah and Rachel. Leah had six sons in the following seven years (1925-1919 B.C.; cf. Gen 29:32-35; 30:17-21). Given the limitations of pregnancy, it was impossible for her to have more than one child per year per six different conceptions, with one childless year after the fourth son (Gen 29:35; 30:9). If that was the case, it is reasonable to assume that Judah, her fourth child, was born in ca. 1922 B.C.

Perez

Shortly after the sale of Joseph into slavery (Gen 37:2-38:2) in 1902 B.C., Judah was married. He had three sons, Er, Onan and Shelah (possibly born as early as ca. 1901-1899 B.C. respectively). If Er was given in marriage to Tamar around the age of 15,[28] then after dying, his brother Onan, perhaps as early as one year later, married her and then also died himself, the years of their marriages to her could have been roughly 1886 and 1885 B.C. At that point Judah asked Tamar to wait until Shelah was grown, probably meaning to reach a marriageable age, if the above is correct, around the same age as his older brothers. However, that age was reached (ca. 1884 B.C.) and past (ca. 1883 B.C.; Gen 38:14) when Tamar decided to take things into her own hands. The result was that Judah had a fourth son, Perez (a twin) by her, probably in ca. 1882 B.C., as the text (Gen 45:6) would seem to indicate that these events occurred before Judah and his brothers made their two journeys to Egypt to buy food (in ca. 1881 and 1880 B.C.), after which they moved to Egypt in 1880 B.C.

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[28] Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001): 37, 54; Pierre de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), 29; Victor P. Hamilton, "Marriage," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. by David N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 562-563; Jon L. Berquist, "Marriage," *Erdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David N. Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 862; and Keil and Delitzsch, *Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 1:1:339, n. 1. Mosaic legislation declared a man of 20 years old able to go to war (Num 1:3). Marriage probably would have been desirable before taking on the responsibility of military affairs so that progeny would be guaranteed (Deut 20:7; 24:5); cf. J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy* (Downers Grove, Il: Inter Varsity Press, 1974), 245. It would seem that sixteen or seventeen was the expected age of marriage for a young man around the time of Jesus; cf. Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life* (Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans, 1982), 147. The Mishna (*m.* ʾ*Abot* 5.21.) suggests eighteen years of age.

Hezron and Ram

If Perez was born in 1882 B.C. as reconstructed above, it would have been impossible for Hezron, his son, to go down to Egypt two years later as a cursory reading of Genesis 46:12 might seem to suggest.[29] It would seem that the 66 persons mentioned in this list (Gen 46:26) were founders of families (*mišpāḥôṯ*; clans or lineage segments) according to Numbers 26.[30] Therefore, those born later were considered as coming down to Egypt in the loins of their forefathers (Exod 1:5) since they were ultimately the founders of lineage segments. Thus, Hezron must have been born sometime after Jacob and his family came to Egypt.

There are few, if any, indications for the time of birth for most of the remaining individuals. Therefore, it will be necessary to calculate an average length of time for a generation. In so doing, by no means is it suggested that the dates arrived at here are absolutely accurate, but that they are only within reasonable proximity. It must also be noted that the named individuals were not all firstborn sons. Judah and Perez, as already seen, were both the fourth sons of their respective fathers; Ram, it would seem, was the second (1 Chr 2:9), and David the eighth (1 Sam 17:12, 14). It is likely that some of the other individuals in this genealogy were also not firstborn sons.

It has been suggested that a generation is approximately 25 years[31] and this figure will be used here for the period after the Exodus, as it seems to fit well at a time when the average lifespan was about 70 years (Ps 90:10). However, it would seem that 140 years was closer to the average age at death from Abraham to the Exodus (Exod 6:16, 18, 20).[32] Therefore, we

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[29] Likewise, Benjamin, who was only about 23 years old at the time, as he could not have already had ten sons (Gen 46: 21), or alternatively eight sons and two grandsons (Num 26:38-40).

[30] There are a few differences in spelling or forms of names, and five missing names; cf. Kell and Delitzsch, "Pentateuch," 1:1:371-374.

[31] John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 121.

[32] Levi, Kohath and Amram reached 137, 133 and 137 years respectively; cf. also Sarah, 127; Abraham, 175; Ishmael, 137; Isaac thought he would die at 137 (Gen 27:1-10), but lived to 180; Jacob, 147; Joseph, 110; Aaron, 123; and Moses, 120. On the figure of 50 years for an average generation, even in medieval and modern times, cf. D. Henige *The Chronology of Oral Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), 136-144; and "Comparative Chronology and the Ancient Near East: A Case for Symbiosis," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 261 (1986): 62.

will use a figure of 50 years for a generation, or twice 25 for 70 years, for indiduals listed in the early part of the genealogy. If this figure is a good approximation for an average pre-Exodus generation, then Hezron and Ram could have been born ca. 1832 B.C. and 1782 B.C. respectively.

Genealogical Fluidity and the Dating of Amminadab and Nahshon

As indicated above, fluidity is a common feature in genealogies. Unimportant names were omitted, usually in the middle of the genealogy, between the names of the lineage founder (and his sons), and the then living individuals at the end.[33] The lineage founder in the genealogy of Ruth 4, though not mentioned, was Judah. His immediate decsendants (Perez, Hezron and Ram) formed clans or lineage segments (Num 26:20-22; 1 Chr 2:9-15). The living members at the end of the genealogy (or at least those in living memory) without getting into the thorny issues of authorship and purpose of the book,[34] were David and Jesse. However, genealogical fluidity is also determined somewhat by the function of the genealogy, i.e., by the political, social and religious situations behind them.[35] Individuals who were associated with the important religious and political event of the Exodus and the birth of a nation appear in this genealogy. Since unimportant names have no doubt been omitted here as well, a logical place for this to occur would be between Ram (the last of the sons to have formed a lineage segment) and Amminadab (the first name in connection with the Exodus event, cf. Num 1:7, 7:12, 17).

If three missing links are postulated between these two groups of individuals, their approximate birthdates would be: 1) ca. 1732 B.C.; 2) ca. 1682 B.C.; and 3) ca. 1632 B.C. Amminadab, who follows, would then have been born ca. 1582 B.C. and Nahshon, who was the prince (*nāśîʾ*; Num 2:3) of Judah shorty after the Exodus, would have been born ca. 1532 B.C.

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[33] Wilson, "Genealogy and History," 33, and "Azel," 12.

[34] Goslinga, 516-519.

[35] Wilson, "Genealogy and History," 36-45.

Comparison with the Genealogy of Levi (Pre-Exodus)

As a check on our reconstruction so far, we will compare the genealogy of Judah with the genealogy of Levi in 1 Chronicles 6:1-8.[36] Since Levi, the third son of Jacob, was born one year before Judah (Gen 29:34-35) in 1923 B.C., it is reasonable to assume that the two genealogies might be roughly parallel. Levi lived 137 years (Exod 6:16). It follows from this that his death occurred in 1786 B.C. Next in the geneaolgy are Kohath and Amram who founded clans (*mišpāḥôṯ*) or lineage segments (Num 3:27; 26:57).

As in the genealogy of Ruth in chapter 4, several unimportant names seem to have been omitted prior to those individuals connected with the Exodus (cf. Table 1). They are followed by the father of Moses and Aaron.[37] Assuming 1450 B.C. as the date of the Exodus, then Aaron would have have lived from 1534-1411 B.C. (Exod 7:7; Num 33:38-39) and Moses from 1531/30-1410 B.C. (Exod 7:7; Deut 34:7-8). Aaron was married to Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab, and sister of Nahshon (Exod 6:23). Hence, our reconstructed birth of Nahshon in 1532 B.C. is well within range of Aaron who was born in 1534 B.C. and married Nahshon's sister (cf. Table 1).

Salmon

We return now to the genealogy in Ruth 4. At this point, it is logical to assume the possibility of yet another missing name following the important religious and political event of the Exodus. If this is correct, a date of ca. 1482 B.C. would be expected for this unnamed son of Nahshon. Salmon then, would have been born ca. 1432 B.C., during the time when Israel was wandering in the wilderness. After a period of 40 years in Sinai, Israel entered Canaan and Jericho was destroyed, according to the chronology suggested here, in 1410 B.C. If as has been suggested elsewhere,[38] Salmon was one of the men who spied out Jericho, and was intimately involved with the conquest, which took about seven years to complete (1411-1404

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[36] We have previously dealt with both of these genealogies in an earlier study, but in less detail. cf. Ray "Sojourn," 237-239; 247-248, cf. Table 2.

[37] On the issues connected with the name of the father of Aaron and Moses cf. Ray, "Sojourn," 237-238, and n. 30.

[38] Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1953-1957), 2:429.

B.C.; cf. Num 21-25, 31; Josh 2-12; 14:6-15, 15:13-19), his marriage to Rahab (Matt 1:5) probably would not have taken place until after these events took place, i.e., ca. 1403 B.C. or so (Deut 20:7, 24:5).

Boaz and Obed

Boaz, the son of the union between Salmon and Rahab, could have been born as early as ca. 1402 B.C. However, this date is probably too early, since Boas is associated with the period of the Judges (Ruth 1:1; 2:1). According to the text (Judg 2:7, 10), there was a generation (as seen above, ca. 25 years) between the conquest of Canaan and the period of the Judges, reconstructed elsewhere as beginning about 1369 B.C.[39] At this point in the genealogy there remains only the names of Boaz and Obed to cover the entire period of the Judges, an era of over 300 years in length (Judg 11:26); Jesse and David who follow, associated with the beginning of the Monarchy. It would seem then that a number of names have been omitted from the genealogy at this point; with the two representatives from the period of the Judges also connected with the story of Ruth. On the basis of the tradition that Boas was the son of Salmon and Rahab (Matt 1:5) and the above reconstruction of the time of the sojourn in the Book of Ruth as being connected with the Moabite oppression, it would seem that Boaz and Obed existed rather early during the period of the Judges.

If the famine in Judah began around the beginning of the Moabite oppression (ca. 1321 B.C.)[40] and the sojourn among the Moabites lasted *about* 10 years (Ruth 1:4), Naomi and Ruth would have returned to Bethlehem around 1311 B.C. The marriage of Ruth and Boaz apparantly occurred not long after their return, with the birth of Obed probably the following year (ca. 1310 B.C.). The text would seem to indicate that Boas was no longer a young man when he and Ruth married (Ruth 3:10). While we are not told his exact age, it can be approximated by a comparison with what is known about his kinsmen Elimelek. The latter was old enough to have sons of marriageable age (as seen above, about 15-20 years old), and was himself probably at least 45 years old (25 years for a post-Exodus generation, plus the approximate age of his sons who were married a short time later) when he and his family began their sojourn. If these figures are

[39] Ray, "Period of the Judges," 99, Table 1.
[40] Ibid., 99, Table 1.

roughly correct, Elimelek would have been born ca. 1366 B.C. (1321 B.C. + 45 years). His relative, Boaz, might have been a few years older than him. If so, this would place his birth at ca. 1370 B.C.[41]

David and Jesse

The years of David's life are well known. He became king at the age of 30 and reigned 40 years (1010-970 B.C.; cf. 2 Sam 5:4-5; 1 Kgs 2:11). It follows that he was born in 1040 B.C. He was the youngest of eight sons born to Jesse (1 Sam 17:12, 14), who may have been around 45 years old or so when David was born, as he was an old man at the time David fought Goliath (1 Sam 17:12), it would seem at about age 18 (ca. 1022 B.C.),[42] placing Jesse's birth about 1085 B.C. This would leave eight generations of 25 years a piece to represent the eight unimportant names which were left out between Obed and Jesse (ca. 1310-1085 B.C.).

Comparison with the Genealogy of Levi (Post-Exodus)

We will again check our reconstruction of this part of the genealogy of Judah with that of Levi, in 1 Chronicles 6:1-8. Comparisons have been made so far through the ninth generation, or that of Moses and Aaron with Nahshon. From here, the genealogy of Levi continues from Eleazar through Zadok who was a high priest in the time of David. Near the beginning of this section of the geneaologies of Levi and Judah, Jonathan, the grandson of Moses (Judg 18:30), and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar (Num 25:10; Josh 24:33; and Judg 20:28) of the tribe of Levi, were contemporary with Salmon. However, as can be seen by our reconstruction of genealogy of Judah, there appears to be four names too few in the

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[41] If this were the case, Rahab would have been at least 55 years old when she bore Boas, assuming she was about 15 years old or so at the time when Jericho was destroyed. While 55+ is rather old for pregnancy, in biblical times there are examples of Sarah, the wife of Abraham, and Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, who became pregnant in their old age. Even in modern times, women occasionally give birth late in life; cf. *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pregnancy_over_age_50*.

[42] Israelite males had to be at least 20 years of age for military service (Num 1:3). It appears that while at least three of David's older brothers were able to participate, David himself, although old enough to be an experienced fighter, was still too young to go into battle (1 Sam 17:13-15; 33-37).

genealogy of Levi for the same time period. Thus, it would seem that a number of unimportant names have been left out of this genealogy as well.

Though names are left out or omitted from the genealogies as a matter of course, some of them are sometimes preserved elsewhere in the narrative portions of the biblical text. According to Numbers 3:32, 20:25-28, 25:12-13 it was God's original intention that the high-priestly line go through Eleazar. Eli, however, was the first of five high priests (1 Sam 1:3, 14:3, 22:20) from the line of Ithamar (1 Chr 24:3), which for some reason, possibly because the corresponding high priest-to-be was too young,[43] interrupted the legitimate line. This family of high priests of the line of Ithamar is sometimes seen as being parallel to Zerahiah through Zadok[44] due to a tradition in Josephus.[45] This might suggest that the four missing names lie between Uzzi and Zerahiah.

Even though the high priestly line in 1 Chronicles 6 is incomplete in several places,[46] it would appear that most, if not all, of the missing individuals are known from the narrative sections in the historical books of the Old Testamant. A parallel situation exists in the genealogy of Judah when it comes to the period of the Monarchy (1 Chr 3:9-17). There, two monarchs[47] were omitted who are also known from the historical books. The biblical writers seemed to have kept good track of the human rulers of the theocratic kingdom, even though for possible reasons of literary style, genealogical peculiarities such as depth and function, or theological reasons, they left out certain names in the genealogies. Likewise, they seem to have kept good track of those who had the leading role in the other major office of the Theocracy, the high priesthood.

Since both Zadok and Abithar were priests in the time of David (2 Sam 15:29, 35), it would seem logical that the missing names should be located at the end of the genealogy. If this is the case, then this part of the high-priestly genealogy consists of Aaron through Ahitub, followed by Eli, Phinehas, Ahitub and Ahimelech of the line of Ithamar. They are followed by Zadok of the line of Eleazar and Abiathar of the line of Ithamar in the

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[43] Keil and Delitzsch, Joshua, Judges, Ruth 1 & 2 Samuel, 2:2:39-40.

[44] Ibid., 39.

[45] Josephus, *Antiquities* 5.11.5.

[46] Jehoiada (2 Kgs 11:15, 12:2), Zechariah (2 Chr 24:20) and Urijah (2 Kgs 16:11, 15-16) among others are known to have existed, but do not appear in this genealogy.

[47] Athaliah (2 Kgs 11:3-4; 2 Chr 22:12) and Jehoahaz (2 Kgs 23:31; 2 Chr 36:2).

time of David. As with other names following omissions in the biblical genealogies, Zadok should be considered a descendant of Ahitub rather than his son, since the Hebrew word *hôlîḏ* "become the father of " is not restricted to the immediately following generation, but can refer to any later descendant.[48] It is known that Eli judged Israel 40 years (1 Sam 4:18). From our earlier reconstruction of the period of the Judges, it was seen that the years of his judgeship were ca. 1110-1070 B.C.[49] It is also known that he was 98 years old when he died (1 Sam 4:15), so his birth must have been in 1168 B.C. This is well with in the range of ca. 1160 B.C. for the parallel member in the genealogy of Judah (cf. Table 1). Therefore, it would seem that our reconstruction of the last part of this genealogy, like that of the first part, is within reason.

Summary and Conclusion

In sum, the chronological implications in the Book of Ruth are dependent on two reference points in the story itself. The first of these is indicated by the fact that the sojourn took place in the fields or territory (*śᵉdê*) of Moab. While this Hebrew phrase could refer to Moab Proper, the Plains of Moab, or the Mishor, the first two regions were usually drier, or potentially more so, then the famine-stricken homeland of the family of Elimelek, which would suggest the Mishor as the more likely location of their sojourn. Ironically, this same region had recently been Israelite territory. They had earlier conquered the Amorites (Num 21:21-35; Deut 2:24-37), who had in turn, previously taken this area from the Moabites (Num 21:26-30). Moab was now ocuppying a region that had been under their control in the distant past, and this was the only time that it was again in their possession during the period of the Judges (Ruth 1:1).

The other reference point is the genealogy in chapter four. Like other genealogies, it does not function as history writing, but nevertheless, should still be considered historically accurate in that both political and religious

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[48] P.R. Gilchrist, "yālad," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason J. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke. (Chicago, Il: Moody Press, 1980), 1:379.

[49] Cf. Ray, "Period of the Judges," 99, Table 1.

spheres of reference are represented.[50] The genealogy highlights relationships between the characters in the story to the religious event of the Exodus (through those individuals who were connected with it), as well as in the political realm (in association with King David). It also displays such features as depth and fluidity, and these have been used in its reconstruction. Enough biblical information exists to make definite points of contact with the beginning, mid-point (dealing with those associated with the Exodus event) and end of the genealogy. Where information is lacking, average lengths for a generation have been used, along with the genealogy of Levi, which although temporally parallel, had a different function in that it deals with the religious sphere, i.e., the priestly office in the post-Exodus section. In terms of the period of the Judges, the genealogy lists only Boaz and Obed for a space of over 300 years, and they could conceivably fit anywhere within the period. We have suggested, however, that they lived early in the period, and that the birth of Obed occurred during the latter part of the Moabite oppression. This, as it turns out, seems to fit rather well within the perameters suggested by the biblical text and the features of genealogical analysis. Though speculative in many ways, it would seem that these two reference points provide enough data to make a reasonable case for the events described in the Book of Ruth as having occurred during the Moabite oppression within the period of Judges.

Finally, from our modern perspective the suggested time frame of this event might seem unlikely since the Moabites were oppressing God's people in terms of territorial expansion and occupation (Judg 3:13), thus supposedly necessitating an abitrary favoring of some Israelites while subjecting others to tyranny. However, unlike modern geopolitical borders, ancient boundaries were actually quite fluid, making movement relatively easy. Local permission would have been all that was necessary for the family of Elimelek to sojourn among individual Moabites such as the familes of Ruth and Orpah. Also, while there were exceptions such as the deportation of large segments of a population during the late 8th through much of the 6th centuries B.C., most of the time the change of an overlord due to conquest had an effect mainly on the elite whose tribute or duty, in

[50] R. R. Wilson, "The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94 (1975):189.

kind, went in a different direction. However, for the average individual, life went on more or less as it had under the previous authority. Placed in its proper Late Bronze Age context, a sojourn during the Moabite oppression should not be so out of place as it might seem when read through the lens of post-911glasses.

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Table 1

Summary of Genealogical Data

Generation	1 Chr 6:1-8	1 Sam 1:3; 14:3; 22:20	Ruth 4:18-22; 1Chr 2:3-5; 9-15
1	*Levi** (1923-1786)[+]		*Judah** (1922)
2	*Kohath*		*Perez* (ca. 1882)
3	*Amran*		*Hezron* (ca. 1832)
4	?		*Ram* (ca.1782)
5	?		? (ca.1732)
6	?		? (ca. 1682)
7	?		? (ca. 1632)
8	Amran (?)		Amminadab (ca. 1582)
9 Moses (1531/30-1410)	Aaron (1534-1411)		Nahshon (ca. 1532)
10 Gershom	Eleazar	Ithamar	? (ca. 1482)
11 Jonathan	Phinehas		Salmon (ca. 1432)
12	Abishua		Boaz (ca. 1370)
13	Bukki		Obed (ca. 1310)
14	Uzzi		? (ca. 1285)
15	Zerahiah		? (ca. 1260)
16	Meraioth		? (ca. 1235)
17	Amariah		? (ca. 1210)
18	Ahitub		? (ca. 1185)
19	?	Eli (1168-1070)	? (ca. 1160)
20	?	Phinehas (?-1070)	? (ca. 1135)
21	?	Ahitub	? (ca. 1110)
22	?	Ahimelech	Jesse (ca. 1085)
23	Zadok	Abiathar	David (1040-970)

* Linage Founder
Founders of Families (lineage segments)
[+] in dates B.C.

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Creation in the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament: An Intertextual Approach

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1. Introduction

The topic of creation in Old Testament theology for most of its recent history has been neglected and has often been relegated to the level of a subheading within the sections of soteriology, covenant, trinity, or any other possibly relevant section: "Nevertheless, creation to this day has been one of the 'proverbial step-children' in the recent discipline of Old Testament theology."[1] While Rendtorff only diagnoses the problem, Brueggemann, in looking for a rationale, refers the responsibility for the peripheral position of creation in theology to the dichotomy between the Israelite faith and Canaanite religion, or history and myth, that found its way into biblical theology during the earlier part of the last century through scholars like Gerhard von Rad in Europe who suggested that creation was

[1] Rolf Rendtorff, "Some Reflections on Creation as a Topic of Old Testament Theology," in *Priests, Prophets and Scribes. Essays on the Formation and Heritage of Second Temple Judaism in Honour of Joseph Blenkinsopp* (ed. Eugene Ulrich, John W. Wright, Robert P. Carroll and Philip R. Davies; JSOTSS 149; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 204-12.

subservient to salvation,[2] or Ernest Wright in the USA who maintained that "Israel was little interested in nature."[3]

A number of scholars moved beyond the paradigm created by von Rad[4] and recognized the prominence of creation in the theological thinking of the Old Testament, both in terms of position and content.

Claus Westermann in his work on Gen 1-11 places creation in history through its expression in myth and ritual. Thus it is the primeval event, and the stories told about and enacted upon it, are part of the universal traditions of mankind. The biblical authors–for Westermann the Yahwist and the Priestly author–adapted these stories theologically for Israel and identified them as part of God's work of blessing which for Westermann "really means the power of Fertility."[5]

In direct and intentional contrast with von Rad, the doctrine has been described as the horizon of biblical theology by Hans Heinrich Schmid. He relates creation to world-order and by comparing it with creation beliefs in other ANE cultures he arrives at the conclusion that history is the

[2] "Our main thesis was that in genuinely Yahwistic belief the doctrine of creation never attained to the stature of a relevant, independent doctrine. We found it invariably related, and indeed subordinated, to soteriological considerations." Gerhard von Rad, "The Theological Problem of the O.T. Doctrine of Creation," in *Creation in the Old Testament* (ed. Bernhard W. Anderson; Issues in Religion and Theology 6; Philadelphia and London: Fortress and SPCK, 1984), 62. The article was originally published in 1936.

[3] G. Ernest Wright, *The Old Testament Against its Environment* (London: SCM, 1950), 71. Von Rad saw creation as a very late addition to the theological construct of the Old Testament. Brueggemann maintains that von Rad's conclusions were framed by the socio-cultural context of the 1930s with the struggle between the German Church and National Socialism which promulgated a "Blood and soil" religion that played towards Canaanite fertility religion. Concludes Brueggemann: "The work of Gerhard von Rad and G. Ernest Wright, taken up, advanced, and echoed by numerous scholars, articulated a radical either/or of history versus nature, monotheism versus polytheism, and ethical versus cultic categories." Walter Brueggemann, "The Loss and Recovery of Creation in Old Testament Theology," *Theology Today* 53 (1996): 179.

[4] "OT scholarship is nearly unanimous in regarding creation faith in ancient Israel as chronologically late and theologically secondary." Hans Heinrich Schmid, "Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation: 'Creation Theology' as the Broad Horizon of Biblical Theology," in *Creation in the Old Testament* (ed. Bernhard W. Anderson; Issues in Religion and Theology 6; Philadelphia and London: Fortress and SPCK, 1984), 103.

[5] Claus Westermann, "Creation and History in the Old Testament," in *The Gospel and Human Destiny* (ed. Vilmos Vajta; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1971), 32.

realization of this order.[6] "Only within this horizon could Israel understand its special experiences with God in history."[7] One wonders if Schmid is not committing the mistake of earlier biblical theologians in looking for the Mitte of the Old Testament and finding it in creation.[8]

Nevertheless, it appears that in most cases the dating of texts lies at the bottom of the question as to where to position creation within the framework of Old Testament theology. While the Bible begins with creation, biblical theologies mostly do not, since traditional critical approaches to Old Testament texts do not allow for an early dating of the Urgeschichte (Gen 1-11).[9] Most of these studies, von Rad's included, have rather taken Isaiah 40-55, the so-called Deutero-Isaiah, dated by literary criticism to post-exilic times, as a chronologically secure paradigm for creation in the Old Testament against which other texts, amongst them Gen 1-3, are then bench-marked.[10] This leads inevitably to the conclusion that creation is a late addition to the theological thinking of the Old

[6] Schmid arrives at that conclusion by paralleling the Hebrew צְדָקָה. 'righteousness' with the Egyptian *ma'at* 'world-order'. For a critique of his position, see Stefan Paas, *Creation & Judgement: Creation Texts in Some Eighth Century Prophets* (Oudtestamentische Studiën 47; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003), 10-14.

[7] Ibid., 12.

[8] See, for example, Smend who considers the doctrine of election to be pivotal in Old Testament theology. Rudolf Smend, *Die Mitte des Alten Testaments: Gesammelte Studien, Bd. 1* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1986). Recent theologies of the Old Testament have moved away from this approach. Hasel comments: "An OT theology which recognizes God as the dynamic, unifying center provides the possibility to describe the rich and variegated theologies and to present the various longitudinal themes, motifs, and ideas. In affirming God as the dynamic, unifying center of the OT we also affirm that this center cannot be forced into a static organizing principle on the basis of which an OT theology can be constructed." Gerhard F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 142.

[9] Blenkinsopp summarizes the traditional view of source criticism with regard to Gen 1-11: "According to the documentary critics this [Gen 1:1-2:3] is the first paragraph of the P source. With very few exceptions … , these critics have read the early history of humanity [Gen 1-11] as a conflation of an early J and a late P source… ." Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 60.

[10] Comments Paas: "The reason why an inquiry into creation in the Old Testament often begins with Deutero-Isaiah is obvious. About the dating of the Psalms and even the stories of the beginning there is much less agreement." Paas, *Creation & Judgement*, 14.

Testament.[11] Implicit in this approach is the danger of circular reasoning, since creation texts are being dated on the basis of religious historical paradigms as late and are then used to date other creation passages accordingly:

> It is obviously somewhat paralyzing to realize that we form a picture of Israel's religious history in part on the basis of certain texts which, in turn, with the help of the picture obtained by historical research, we subsequently judge with respect to 'authenticity' and historical truth.[12]

Recognizing the unsatisfying results of such a dating scheme that is further informed by a particular school of thought with regard to Israelite religious history,[13] an approach to the topic of creation in the Old Testament should depart from a contextual reading of the texts in question in the various bodies of Old Testament literature.

The prophetic literature of the Old Testament provides a rich tapestry for such a reading, since the implicit nature of prophecy in the Old Testament is reformative in nature, i.e., referring back to the historic deeds of Yahweh in the past (creation, exodus, conquest, etc.) and thus motivating a return to him in the respective present. While there are studies that have touched on the subject of creation in individual prophetic books,[14] there is

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[11] With reference to von Rad's 1936 article, Brueggemann comments: "It was in this article … that von Rad asserted that 'the doctrine of creation' was peripheral to the Old Testament, and that the Old Testament was not, at least until very late, at all interested in creation per se." Brueggemann, "The Loss and Recovery of Creation," 178.

[12] Paas, *Creation & Judgement*, 29.

[13] "But today the problems of dating the texts as well as the problem of the age of creation traditions in Israel are more controversial then ever." Rendtorff, "Some Reflections on Creation," 208.

[14] For example: Walter Brueggemann, "Jeremiah: Creatio in Extremis," in *God who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner* (eds. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 152-70; Richard J. Clifford, "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah and its Cosmogonic Language," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55 (1993): 1-17; Stephen L. Cook, "Creation Archetypes and Mythogems in Ezekiel: Significance and Theological Ramifications," in *SBL Seminar Papers, 1999* (Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 38; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 123-46; Andrew A. da Silva, "Die funksie van die skeppingstradisie in die boek Jeremia," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 47.4 (1991): 920-9; Michael Deroche, "Zephaniah I 2-3: The 'Sweeping' of Creation," *Vetus Testamentum* 30.1 (1980): 104-9; idem, "The Reversal of Creation in Hosea," *Vetus Testamentum* 31.4 (1981): 400-9; Michael Fishbane, "Jeremiah IV 23-26 and Job III 3-13: A Recovered use of the Creation Pattern," *Vetus Testamentum* 21.2 (1971): 151-67; Julie Galambush, "Castles in the Air: Creation as Property in Ezekiel," in *SBL Seminar Papers,*

need for a more synthetic treatment of the issue under question.[15] The present study will therefore provide a survey of creation[16] in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament, i.e., in the Books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Book of the Twelve, and Daniel, although the order of presentation will be rather chronological than canonical. This survey might be able to shed some light on the question if the Old Testament prophets based their understanding of creation on the model as presented in Gen 1-3 or if their cosmology allowed for alternative models of creation.

1999 (Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 38; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 147-72; Thomas W. Mann, "Stars, Sprouts, and Streams: The Creative Redeemer of Second Isaiah," in *God who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner* (eds. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 135-51; David L. Petersen, "Creation in Ezekiel: Methodological Perspectives and Theological Prospects," in *SBL Seminar Papers, 1999* (Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 38; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 490-526; Gerhard Pfeifer, "Jahwe als Schöpfer der Welt und Herr ihrer Mächte in der Verkündigung des Propheten Amos," *Vetus Testamentum* 41.4 (1991): 475-81; Dominic Rudman, "Creation and Fall in Jeremiah X 12-16," *Vetus Testamentum* 48.1 (1998): 63-73; Gene M. Tucker, "The Peacable Kingdom and a Covenant with the Wild Animals," in *God who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner* (eds. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 215-25; Steven Tuell, "The Rivers of Paradise: Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Genesis 2:10-14," in *God who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner* (eds. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 171-89; and Robert R. Wilson, "Creation and New Creation: The Role of Creation Imagery in the Book of Daniel," in *God who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner* (eds. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 190-203.

[15] Exceptions are: Hendrik A. Brongers, *De Scheppingstraditie bij de profeten* (Amsterdam: H J Paris, 1945); Wolfram Hermann, "Wann wurde Jahwe zum Schöpfer der Welt," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 23 (1992): 165-80; David L. Petersen, "The World of Creation in the Book of the Twelve," in *God who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner* (eds. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 204-14; Hans J. Zobel, "Das Schöpfungshandeln Jahwes im Zeugnis der Propheten," in *Alttestamentlicher Glaube und biblische Theologie: Festschrift für Horst Dietrich Preuss zum 65. Geburtstag* (eds. Jutta Hermann and Hans J. Zobel; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1992), 191-200; and most recently, Paas, *Creation & Judgement*. The present study is indebted to Paas doctoral dissertation which was originally published in 1998 and updated in 2004. The author studies creation motifs in three eighth-century prophets (Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah), leaving out Micah since, according to Paas, he is lacking creation terms (15). The strength of Pass' study lies in his methodological approach which is reflected to some extent in this paper.

[16] References to creation may appear in a variety of forms within the prophetic literature of the OT. For a delimitation of creation markers in the text, cf. our discussion below under 2.2.

2. Methodological Questions

There are two points that need attention before evaluating the evidence of creation in the Old Testament prophets. The first is the question of intertextuality, based on the above mentioned observation that much of the prophets' message is intrinsically evocative of earlier texts, creating points of reference to events in the course of Israel's history, but at the same time applying them to their present contexts.[17] The second issue grows somewhat out from the first and refers to the question of how one can identify references to creation in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament.

2.1. Intertextuality

Intertextuality has recently come into focus in biblical scholarship although it appears to be rather elusive when being subjected to an attempt at finding a universal definition of the concept.[18] A number of approaches

[17] See for example the announcement of Ezekiel during the Babylonian exile which is reminiscent of creation, however, in the context of restoration: "I will increase the number of men and animals upon you, and they will be fruitful and become numerous. I will settle people on you as in the past and will make you prosper more than before. Then you will know that I am the LORD." (Ezek 36:11). All biblical references are taken from the New International Version if not indicated otherwise.

[18] The introduction of the term has been attributed to Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980). Some of the contributions on intertextual theory in biblical studies during the last couple of years include: Brevard S. Childs, "Critique of Recent Intertextual Canonical Interpretation," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 115.2 (2003): 173-84; Paul R. Noble, "Esau, Tamar, and Joseph: Criteria for Identifying Inner-biblical Allusions," *Vetus Testamentum* 52.2 (2002): 219-52; Gary E Schnittjer, "The Narrative Multiverse Within the Universe of the Bible: the Question of 'Borderlines' and 'Intertextuality'," *Westminster Theological Journal* 64.2 (2002): 231-52; Robert W. Wall, "The Intertextuality of Scripture: The Example of Rahab (James 2:25)," in *The Bible at Qumran: Text, Shape, and Interpretation* (ed. Peter W. Flint; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 217-36; Richard L. Schultz, "The ties that bind: intertextuality, the identification of verbal parallels, and reading strategies in the Book of the Twelve," in *Society of Biblical Literature 2001 Seminar Papers* ; Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Paper 40; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 39-57; Gershon Hepner, "Verbal Resonance in the Bible and Intertextuality," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 96 (2001): 3-27; Craig C. Broyles, "Traditions, Intertextuality, and Canon," in *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis* (ed. Craig C. Broyles; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2001), 157-75; Craig C. Broyles, "Traditions, Intertextuality, and Canon," in *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis* (ed. Craig C. Broyles; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2001), 157-75; Steve Moyise, "Intertextuality and the Study of the Old Testament in the New Testament," in *The Old Testament in the New Testament. Essays in Honour of J. L. North* (ed. Steve Moyise; Journal for the Study of the New Testament

have been summarized under this umbrella term, but I would define intertextuality broadly as references between texts that can occur on multiple levels,[19] while its boundaries are often determined by the view of composition of scripture the author employing the term has. What intertextuality does to texts is networking them in a way that creates new contexts and, in this way, new meanings of old texts.[20] Intertextuality also puts various texts on an, at times, complicated timeline and thus gives rise to chronological considerations which have been out of focus to some extent from biblical studies in the vogue of literary criticism.[21]

In application to the prophets of the Old Testament I would suggest the following timeline that will serve as the chronological framework against which the usage of creation texts in the prophets has to be pitched.[22]

Supplement Series 189; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 14-41; John Barton, "Intertextuality and the 'Final Form' of the Text," in *Congress Volume Oslo 1998* (ed. André Lemaire and M. Sæbø; Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 80; Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 2000), 33-7; Patricia Tull, "Intertextuality and the Hebrew Scriptures," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 8 (2000): 59-90.

[19] See below under 2.2.

[20] Nielsen differentiates between three phases for intertextual reading: (1) author's intention; (2) editorial and canonical intentions; and (3) pos-biblical traditions and reader-response. Kirsten Nielsen, "Intertexuality and Hebrew Bible," in *Congress Volume Oslo 1998* (ed. André Lemaire and M. Sæbø; Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 80; Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2000), 18-9. However, for Nielsen it almost appears impossible to reconstruct phase 2, while other scholars like Labahn recognize the inner-biblical chronological dimension of intertextuality. Antje Labahn, "Metaphor and Intertextuality: 'Daughter of Zion' as a Test Case: Response to Kirsten Nielsen 'From Oracles to Canon' - and the Role of Metaphor." *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 17.1 (2003): 51.

[21] Representative for this tendency is the statement by Cooper: "We are left . . . with only two sensible and productive ways of reading: 1) reading in a strictly canonical context, and 2) reading from an historical or literary-critical point of view." He then opts for the latter view: "Let the text assume a timeless existence somewhere between the author and the reader. . . . The text, severed from its historical moorings, will cooperate with us and enrich us if we allow it to." Alan M. Cooper, "The life and times of King David according to the book of Psalms," in *The Poet and the Historian: Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism* (ed. Richard E. Friedman; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 130-31.

[22] Without entering into detailed discussions of dating the individual prophetic books, I group them broadly according to centuries. If further details on the dating are necessary they will appear under the relevant sections below.

8th century BC	7th century BC	6th -5th century BC
Jonah	Nahum	Ezekiel
Amos	Habakkuk	Obadiah
Hosea	Zephaniah	Daniel
Micah	Joel	Haggai
Isaiah	Jeremiah	Zechariah
		Malachi

With the help of this rough timeline, I hope to be able to demonstrate how the theological thinking during the period reflected in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament has been progressively shaped by a continuous hermeneutic returning to this pivotal point of origin(s) which is creation.

This also implies that I regard the prophetic literature of the Old Testament as subsequent to the Urgeschichte (Gen 1-11), a point that can be argued both on a literary and historical level,[23] but that will hopefully become even more apparent when it can be demonstrated how the prophets were constantly 'looking back' at creation. Thus, Gen 1-3 becomes the

[23] The emergence of the literary criticism attests to the increasing frustration with traditional historical-critical dating schemes, especially with regard to the Pentateuch. "The shift [from historical towards literary or narrative criticism] derived in part from a dissatisfaction with the so-called assured results of biblical criticism. On the one hand, there was a growing sense that the achievements of historical criticism were anything but 'assured.'" L. Daniel Hawk, "Literary/Narrative Criticism," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 537. This, by no means, has been the assertion of evangelical scholars only, but goes right across the board of academic orientation: "Wer in der gegenwärtigen Situation versucht, eine Aussage über den neuesten Stand der Pentateuchforschung zu machen, der kann nur Enttäuschung verbreiten: Weitgehend anerkannte Auffassungen über die Entstehung des Pentateuch gibt es nicht mehr, und die Hoffnung auf einen neuen Konsens in der Pentateuchkritik scheint es [sic] zur Zeit nur noch als 'Hoffnung wider allen Augenschein' möglich zu sein." Hans-Christoph Schmitt, "Die Hintergründe der neuesten 'Pentateuchkritik' und der literarische Befund der Josefsgeschichte Gen 37-50," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 97.2 (1985): 161. Sailhamer has been prominent in demonstrating the narrative progression and unity of the Pentateuch which in turn provides the canonical reference point for the prophets. John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992); Idem, "The Canonical Approach to the OT: Its Effect on Understanding Prophecy," *JETS* 30.3 (1987): 307-15.

point of reference to which the prophets return when they employ creation terminology and motifs.[24]

2.2. Creation markers

In order to recognize intertextual creation markers, our criteria have to be sufficiently broad in order to move beyond a purely semantic level, but also narrow enough to connect us positively with the creation account of Genesis. A broad range of devices that often belong to totally different discourses, are invoked by scholars in order identify creation in the prophets: allusion, tradition, motif, theme, imagery, metaphor, etc.[25] It is probably safe to divide these into three main groups: (1) lexical, (2) literary, and (3) conceptual. In the following I will present examples taken from the prophetic literature of the Old Testament from each group that reconnect in some way with Gen 1-3.

2.2.1. Lexical creation markers

Semantic Field: Lexical markers in the prophets depart from the semantic field that centers around the theologically most specific ברא "to create" (for example: Isa 40:26; Amos 4:13);[26] it further includes יצר, "to form, shape," (for example: Isa 45:18); the rather generic עשׂה, "to make, do," and its derivatives, (for example: Is 45:18; Jer 10:12; Jon 1:9); and the more solemn פּע "to do, produce" (for example: Isa 45:9, 11), to mention only the most prominent ones that also appear in the prophets.[27] However, all of these words also describe activities beyond creation as found in Gen 1-3 which is an indicator how the reflection on creation served as a departure point for the creation of new meanings.[28]

Word-pairs: In this connection mention should be made of word-pairs like the merismus שָׁמַיִם/אֶרֶץ, "heaven/earth"(Isa 37:16) or אוֹר/חֹשֶׁךְ,

[24] For a discussion on the difference between creation terminology and motif, see Paas, *Creation & Judgement*, 58-60.

[25] Cf. Petersen, "Creation in Ezekiel," 490-1.

[26] In the Qal and Niphal the subject of ברא is always Yahweh and thus it serves as the *terminus technicus* for divine creation, though it is used interchangeably with the roots mentioned below. Cf. Raymond C. van Leeuwen, "ברא," *NIDOTTE* 1:731-2.

[27] For a more exhaustive treatment, cf. ibid, 729-31.

[28] See for example Isa 4:5: "Then the LORD will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy."

"darkness/light" (Isa 42:16; 45:7) that create strong reference markers to creation.[29]

Quotes: An author usually interrupts the flow of his argument with a quote in order to authenticate, substantiate or expand his argument. Apart from direct quotes which are usually introduced by a static formula (for example: Dan 9:13), we also find inverted quotes of the creation account such as Ezek 36:11 where the order of verbs from the original Gen 1:28 is reversed, in order to call attention to the connection between the theology of creation and re-creation, i.e., restoration after the exile.[30]

Allusions: Allusions create less intense lexical reference markers, but are widely used in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament. An allusion is an incomplete or fragmented reference to another text and is thus less easily recognizable and more prone to misinterpretation.[31] Nevertheless when the prophet says in Zeph 1:3: "I will sweep away both men and animals; I will sweep away the birds of the air and the fish of the sea," the allusion to creation is made through reversing the order of creatures as they have been listed in Gen 1, making a theological significant statement of reversal of creation and separation from his Creator.[32]

2.2.2. Literary creation markers

Metaphors: A number of metaphors of God are employed by the prophets and some of them can be used as creation markers.[33] The usage of

[29] According to Houtman, the word-pair 'heaven and earth' in the Old Testament usually points to Yahweh's attributes as Creator (past) and Lord of creation (present). "Man gewinnt den Eindruck, daß JAHWH's 'Schöpfer-sein' und sein 'Herr-sein' untrennbare Aspekte des Erlösungswerkes JHWH's sind, das sich in der Schöpfung des Kosmos offenbarte und sich seither in vielerlei Gestalt innerhalb des Kosmos manifestiert." Cornelius Houtman, *Der Himmel im Alten Testament: Israels Weltbild und Weltanschauung* (Oudtestamentische Studiën 30; Leiden-New York-Köln: Brill, 1993), 96.

[30] Cf. Petersen, "Creation in Ezekiel," 494.

[31] Craig C. Broyles, "Traditions, Intertextuality, and Canon," in *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis* (ed. Craig C. Broyles; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 167.

[32] De Roche, "Zephaniah I 2-3," 106.

[33] For a discussion of the usage of metaphors for the divine, cf. Martin G. Klingbeil, "Metaphors that Travel and (Almost) Vanish: Mapping Diachronic Changes in the Intertextual Usage of the Heavenly Warrior Metaphor in Psalms 18 and 144." Paper read at the Annual Congress of the *European Association for Biblical Studies*. Dresden, 2005. (forthcoming)

the Qal participle of יצר in reference to Yahweh as a potter in Isa 45:9 serves as a good example for the creation connotation of this metaphor.[34]

Poetry: I have shown elsewhere that the authors of the Hebrew Bible used poetry in order to communicate important theological contents.[35] Interestingly, most of the contexts in which creation texts are found in the prophets are poetic in nature. While in itself it would not be a sufficient strong marker, the usage of poetry indicates the presence of a theologically important theme.[36]

2.2.3. Conceptual creation markers

Motifs: Although Yahweh as a king is another metaphor that could be mentioned in terms of creation,[37] in a broader sense, kingship can serve as a motif alluding to creation. Kingship in Israel had to do with building and maintaining the divinely created world-order. While Yahweh is the builder of Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile (Jer 24:6), he is also the builder of Eve in Gen 2:22, whereas in both instances the lexical creation marker בנה, "to build" is used.[38]

Typologies: Typologies preserve historicity of events or personalities from the past and transcend them theologically into the presence.[39] Creation

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[34] See also Isa 29:16; 41:25; 64:8; Jer 18:4, 6; 19:1; and Zech 11:13.

[35] Martin G. Klingbeil, "Poemas en medio de la prosa: poesía insertada en el Pentateuco," in *Pentateuco: inicios, paradigmas y fundamentos: estudios teológicos y exegéticos en el Pentateuco* (ed. Gerald A. Klingbeil; River Plate Adventist University Monograph Series in Biblical and Theological Studies 1; Libertador San Martín: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2004), 61-85.

[36] For a study of poetry in prophetic literature, see for example: David N. Freedman, "Another Look at Biblical Hebrew Poetry," in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. Elaine R. Follis, JSOTSup 40, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 15-6; Lawrence Boadt, "Reflections on the Study of Hebrew Poetry Today," *Concordia Journal* 24 (1998), 163. Stephen A. Geller, "Were the Prophets Poets?" in *'The Place is too Small for us': The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship* (ed. Robert P. Gordon; Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 5; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 154-65.

[37] The king as builder and maintainer of the world-order is allusive to creation. Cf. Paas, *Creation & Judgement*, 69-72.

[38] Kingship in Israel is also related to judgment and functions as a creation motif. When Yahweh via the prophets invite to judgment, they do so in the context of cosmological creation language (see for example: Isa 1:2; Jer 2:12). Cf. ibid., 87-8.

[39] A definition of typology understands it as the "study of persons, events, or institutions in salvation history that God specifically designed to predictively prefigure their antitypical eschatological fulfillment in Christ and the gospel realities brought about by Christ". Richard M. Davidson, "Biblical Interpretation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*

as a historical event is used in the prophetic literature as a type for present and future restoration and the concluding chapters of Isaiah use the reference to creation as a type for the re-creation of a new heaven and earth (Isa 65:17).

It becomes apparent that there is a wide range of creation markers which the prophets employed in their writings to refer to the Urgeschichte. Some of them are easily discernable while others only establish loose links, in that way creating a certain sliding scale on which intertextual relationships can be constructed. The point that needs to be made at this stage is the frequency on which this hermeneutic procedure was invoked, indicating that the prophets build their theology around pivotal themes such as the creation motif.

3. Creation in the Prophets

In the following we will benchmark the prophetic literature of the Old Testament against the above mentioned markers. As mentioned above we will follow a rough chronological sequence, based on our intertextual considerations, since the establishment of a timeline is fundamental in evaluating the theological usage and development of creation in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament. Obviously, an attempt to present an exhaustive account of creation in sixteen books of varied length which account for almost one-third of the Old Testament is destined to failure from the outset. Therefore, the only realistic approach will be a panoramic flight over the prophetic books where we will try to differentiate the intertextual creation patterns from high above.

3.1. Eighth-century Prophets

Under the eighth-century, I group Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah, which in itself is an impressive mix of messengers and messages, together. Jonah, of course, directed his prophecies towards the international arena,[40] while Amos and Hosea addressed the Northern Kingdom, and Micah and Isaiah prophesied in Judah before or until after

(Commentary Reference Series 12; ed. Raoul Dederen; Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 83.

[40] Which is an over-simplification, since the book of Jonah is also highly charged against an exclusivist Israelite nationalism which was prominent during Jeroboam II's reign (cf. 2 Kings 14:25).

the Fall of Samaria.[41] The geographic spread should give us a good indication of the pervasiveness of creation thought during this century.

3.1.1. Jonah

Jonah's message is full of ecological content[42] and as such allusive of creation. In outing himself to the sailors, Jonah defines himself as a follower of the Creator God in a language that is reminiscent of creation and the Decalogue: "Yahveh, God of heaven, I worship/fear who made the sea and the dry land."[43] (Jon 1:9) One cannot but notice the somewhat problematic but very emphatic sentence structure where the predicate (יָרֵא אֲנִי) is inserted between the object (וְאֶת־יְהוָה) and its qualifying relative clause (אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה). Jonah sees himself surrounded by Yahweh the God of creation, although ironically he is not quite sure if he should worship or fear him.[44]

The progressive descent to the depths of the ocean in Jonah's psalm (Jon 2:2-9 [MT 2:3-10]) indicated by the verbal root dry, "to descend," (Jon 2:6 [MT 2:7]; cf. also Jon 1:3, 5) can be related to Gen 1-3. According to the ancient Near Eastern and also to some extend Old Testament cosmologies, there is a spatial dimension of above and below, i.e., the earth is resting on pillars in waters under which the realm of Sheol was to be found.[45] All these elements appear in Jonah's poem: he finds himself cast

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[41] The case here is made for the unity of Isaiah, a point which can be argued widely, especially on literary grounds recurring to common vocabulary, themes, and theology. See for example: J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993). Cf. also Gregory J. Polan, "Still More Signs of Unity in the Book of Isaiah: The Significance of Third Isaiah," *SBL Seminar Papers, 1997* (Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 36; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 224-33.

[42] "With a focus on human beings and their environment, ecology constitutes a prominent theological theme throughout Jonah." Phyllis Trible, "The Book of Jonah," *NIB* 7:482.

[43] My translation.

[44] Consider the double meaning of ירא, "to fear, revere". Ibid., 498.

[45] While it is important to make a differentiation between ANE and OT cosmologies, one needs to remember that the writers of the Hebrew Scriptures lived within and interacted with the broader ANE cosmology, at times even polemically criticizing and demytholigizing it. Cf. Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology," *Evangelical Quarterly* 46.2 (1974): 81-102. However, these texts were not written with the purpose to outline Israelite cosmology in a scientific way. Intents of describing the Israelite cosmology based on the Old Testament as well as Ancient Near Eastern literature and iconography, can be found in the following: Bernd Janowski, "Das biblische Weltbild: eine methodologische Skizze," in *Das biblische Weltbild und seine altorientalischen Kontexte* (Forschungen zum

into the "heart of the sea" (Jon 2:4 [MT 2:5] // Gen 1:10) and cast out of God's presence (Jon 2:5 [MT 2:6]) as Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden (Gen 3:24); he passes through the chaotic waters (Jon 2:5 [MT 2:6] // Gen 1:2) and finally descends to Sheol (Jon 2:2 [MT 2:3]) or the pit (Jon 2:6 [MT 2:7]).[46] Jonah is sinking towards darkness and death, away from light and creation, a process that is equivalent to de-creation.[47]

In the whole book obedient creation is in juxtaposition to disobedient humanity, and the Creator is portrayed as continually being involved in his creation by throwing a storm at Jonah (Jon 1:4), appointing a fish to his double rescue by letting it swallow the disobedient prophet (Jon 1:17 [MT 2:1]) as well as vomiting him onto solid ground (Jon 2:10 [MT 2:11]). He furthermore prepares a plant (Jon 4:6), a worm (Jon 4:7), and an east wind (Jon 4:8) in order to bring his despondent servant to his senses. Creation is not just an event of the past, but reoccurs through Yahweh's permanent involvement in his creation and with his creatures. But foremost, all creation is geared toward Yahweh's salvation acts towards humanity and the question that concludes the Book of Jonah finds its answer in the book's presence in the canon, reiterating Jonah's belief in the supreme

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Alten Testament 32; eds. Beate Ego and Bernd Janowski; Tübingen: J C B Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 2001), 3-26; Annette Krüger, "Himmel-Erde-Unterwelt: kosmologische Entwürfe in der poetischen Literatur Israels," in *Das biblische Weltbild und seine altorientalischen Kontexte* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 32; eds. Beate Ego and Bernd Janowski; Tübingen: J C B Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 2001), 65-83. See also Izak Cornelius, "The Visual Representation of the World in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 20 (1994): 193-218. For a short summary on the difference between ANE and OT cosmology from an Evangelical perspective, see Ernest C. Lucas, "Cosmology," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 130-139.

[46] The understanding of the proper name *Sheol* as a poetic designation of the grave without reference to any form of continuous existence has been demonstrated by Galenieks dissertation: cf. Erics Galenieks, The Nature, Function, and Purpose of the Term שְׁאוֹל in the Torah, Prophets, and Writings. PhD dissertation; Andrews University, 2005.

[47] It is interesting to note the appearance of God's temple in this context. The cosmic symbolism connected to the temple is evident throughout the Old Testament, whereas the temple on earth serves as a reflection of its heavenly counterpart. Thus the temple serves as a creation-motif as demonstrated by Paas, *Creation & Jugdement*, 88-94. Cf. also, Bernd Janowski, "Der Himmel auf Erden: zur kosmologischen Bedeutung des Tempels in der Umwelt Israels," in *Das biblische Weltbild und seine altorientalischen Kontexte* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 32; eds. Beate Ego and Bernd Janowski; Tübingen: J C B Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 2001), 229-60.

Creator-God as initially ironically stated in his confession to the heathen sailors (Jon 1:9).

3.1.2. Amos

Creation in Amos is an analogy of history, presenting Yahweh as Creator continuously interacting with its creation, and more specifically in this prophetic book, in a context of threatening judgement but also salvation. Creation terminology appears predominantly in the three hymns (Amos 4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6) that have a structuring influence in the overall outlay of the book.[48]

Amos 4:13	Amos 5:8-9	Amos 9:5-6
He who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals his thoughts to man, he who turns dawn to darkness, and treads the high places of the earth—the LORD God Almighty is his name.	… he who made the Pleiades and Orion, who turns blackness into dawn and darkens day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land—the LORD is his name—he flashes destruction on the stronghold and brings the fortified city to ruin, he flashes destruction on the stronghold and brings the fortified city to ruin …	The Lord, the LORD Almighty, he who touches the earth and it melts, and all who live in it mourn—the whole land rises like the Nile, then sinks like the river of Egypt—he who builds his lofty palace in the heavens and sets its foundation on the earth, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land—the LORD is his name.

Creation language is predominant in these five verses and a number of lexical creation markers appear in the three passages: ברא, "to create" and יצר, "to form" (Amos 4:13), and עשׂה, "to make" (Amos 4:13; 5:8). Interestingly, all these markers are participles, a syntactic peculiarity which

[48] Cf. Paas, *Creation & Judgement*, 324-6. He further mentions Amos 6:14; 7:1, 4; and 9:11 as texts alluding to creation.

can be found throughout the Book of Amos.[49] Nevertheless, God's creative activity in each instance is brought into relationship with the human sphere indicating how creation touches on human life. One can perceive a certain progression between the three hymns in terms of how God's intervention impacts upon humanity. In Amos 4:13 God reveals his judgement intentions to humankind, whereas Amos 5:8-9 describes the destructive aspect of God's judgement. Amos 9:5-6 finally describes the human reaction to the divine judgement. The startling aspect of Amos' presentation of creation is that it is intrinsically linked to judgement, almost in such a way that creation forms the explanation for destruction. What starts as a hymn of praise for Yahweh the Creator, becomes a threatening description of Yahweh the Judge. This apparent contradiction has startled a number of scholars and most probably, and more deliberately, also Amos' audience. The position of inherent security based on belief in the Creator-God is challenged by Amos and what has provided a basis for a false religious auto-sufficiency becomes now the rationale for judgement,[50] reversing the original function of the hymns.

> By means of the hymns, Amos makes it clear that Yhwh is not a God who could simply be controlled. He challenged certain positions of presupposed rights–by means of which the people presumed the right of existence–from the broader perspective of God's creation.[51]

Thus creation can be contextually oriented towards both comfort and judgement, whereas in Amos it is mostly directed towards judgement. To accept Yahweh as the Creator also implies the acceptance of his power to de-create. On first sight, creation used in this way, is disassociated from salvation, but when judgement is understood as preliminary and partial to

[49] Overall there are 74 participles to be found in Amos. This presents a further argument against the suggestion made by various scholars that the hymns have been added subsequently by a different author. Pfeifer explains the syntactic usage of these forms in Amos as follows: "Nach Aussagen über das Verhalten einer Personengruppe folgt eine mit dem Participium pluralis + Atikel beginnende Aussage darüber, wer die Betreffenden sind." Pfeifer, "Jahwe als Schöpfer der Welt," 477. Paas also comes to the conclusion that the hymns "are sufficiently interwoven with their direct context that we may safely assume that from their origin they belonged with the passages to which they are now connected." Paas, *Creation & Judgement*, 324.

[50] One can test this against the structure of the oracles against the nations in Amos 1-2 all of which are located geographically around Israel, driving the final judgement message against Israel home with an extraordinary rhetoric force.

[51] Paas, *Creation & Judgement*, 324.

salvation, than de-creation becomes a necessary precursor for re-creation. Amos drives this point home by the formulaic usage of the expression שְׁמוֹ יְהוָה, "the Lord is his name," (Amos 4:13; 5:8; 9:6) indicating that this is also and still God, he "is not only the God who creates, but He also destroys."[52]

The book of Amos concludes with a glorious perspective on restoration after judgement (Amos 9:11-15) introduced by the eschatological charged phrase בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, "in that day." The passages alludes to the creation theme by employing building terminology (for example: בנה, "to build," Amos 9:11, 14) and the metaphor of Yahweh as King. Thus within the theological thinking of Amos the correct understanding of creation becomes a prerequisite to the comprehension of re-creation.[53]

3.1.3. Hosea

Creation in Hosea is closely linked to the theme of the creation of Israel as a nation, again as with Amos in a context of pending judgement. Creation is not only analogous to history, but is history itself.

Hosea begins to develop his creation theology with an allusive description of de-creation in Hos 4:1-3 where an interesting reversal of the order of creation as presented in Gen 1 takes place. God is having a רִיב, "controversy, case" with or against Israel (Hos 4:1) which in the relationship focused context of Hosea could be more understood as a quarrel between husband and wife which also constitutes the underlying metaphor of the book.[54] Based on Israel's sins (Hos 4:2), Hos 4:3 invokes judgement by introducing the creation, viz. the anti-creation theme: "Therefore the land will mourn, and all who live in it will waste away; the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea will be extinguished."[55] [My own translation] The three groups of animals represent the three spheres where life is found on earth and the reversal of

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[52] Ibid., 429.

[53] Ibid., 195.

[54] Deroche adduces sufficient evidence to understand רִיב as a controversy or quarrel that could be settled in or out of court and he argues for the latter option since in the context of Hosea we have a situation of only two parties being involved (God and Israel) whereas a lawsuit would necessitate a judge. Deroche, "Creation in Hosea," 408-9.

[55] The verbal root אסף in the Niphal can be translated as "taken away, gathered," and in parallelism with the preceding cola as "extinguished." According to Deroche "the actions described by *'sp* are the complete and absolute opposite of those described by *br'*." Ibid., 405.

their order as known from creation[56] invokes the idea of judgement as de-creation where creation just shrivels up when confronted with and abused by sin.

The affinity between Hos 6:2 and Deut 32:39 can hardly be overlooked in this context and constitutes another creation motif in Hosea,[57] and the reference to Yahweh as the one who puts to death but also resurrects is pointing to the God of Creation which is a theme strongly developed in the Song of Moses. Hos 8:14 picks up on the same motif, again establishing a relationship with the Pentateuch in using the divine creation epithet עֹשֵׂה, "Maker," which also occurs repeatedly in the Song of Moses (Deut 32:6, 15, 18). However, "the notion of creation leads toward indictment and sentence, not toward praise."[58]

Possibly the strongest creation text in Hosea is found in Hos 11:1 and it synthesizes the passages mentioned above into the metaphor of Yahweh as the Creator and Procreator of Israel: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." This verse connects to Hos 1:10 [MT 2:1] ("they will be called 'sons of the living God'") and to the Exodus which is described in creation terminology. Thus the creation of Israel as a nation during the historic events connected with the Exodus from Egypt becomes part of God's creation. Who God elects, he also creates, and with that an intimate and eternal bond is created like that between a father and his son. Beyond reiterating and enhancing creation theology, the metaphor is pedagogic in its rhetoric: "By means of this theme of Israel's creation it is not so much the intention of Hosea to nuance the view that the people had of Yhwh but, rather, to confront them with their own behaviour. They are faithless sons."[59]

3.1.4. Micah

Affinities and intertextual issues between the messages of Micah and Isaiah are numerous and have been pointed out repeatedly by various

[56] Gen 1:20 – fish; Gen 1:20 – birds; Gen 1:24 – beasts; cf. also Gen 1:28 where the same order is used to give dominion over creation to humankind.

[57] "After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence." (Hos 6:2). "See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand." (Deu 32:39) Paas points to the linguistic affinity between the two texts. Paas, *Creation & Judgement*, 343-4.

[58] Petersen, "World of Creation," 207.

[59] Paas, *Creation & Judgement*, 431.

scholars.[60] The most often quoted passage in this context is the almost identical parallel found in Mic 4:1-3, 5 // Is 2:2-5. While the passage can be taken as an argument for a common prophetic message of the two prophets, for the purpose of this study, the focus rests on the creation imagery which is transmitted in an eschatological setting via the metaphor of Mount Zion.[61] According to Old Testament cosmology, Zion lies at the center of the created world and Micah points to the establishment of it in terms of creation terminology (כון, "to establish"–Mic 4:1). Creation in Micah is focused on destruction and consequent re-creation in the context of the 'day of the Lord' with its eschatological implications.[62] The prophet builds a theological bridge between creation in the beginning and in the end around the presence of God as symbolized by the Mount Zion metaphor.[63]

3.1.5. Isaiah

As mentioned above, Deutero-Isaiah was the point of departure for Gerhard von Rad and others in establishing an Old Testament theology of creation, based on the assumption that Isa 40-55 could be dated in the post-exilic period. Nevertheless, recent studies which focus on the literary unity of Isaiah–though few scholars would take the argument to its logical conclusion, i.e., unity of authorship– show that creation theology is present throughout the whole book. In view of the wealth of creation material in Isaiah, I will only focus on a selection of creation texts and motifs that demonstrate the main lines of the prophet's theological thinking on creation. The examples are taken deliberately from across the three divisions proposed by critical scholarship.

Taking Isaiah's temple vision as a chronological departure point, Is 6:1 describes Yahweh along the lines of the heavenly king metaphor which has been identified earlier as allusive to creation. The Song of the Vineyard in the preceding chapter presents an important aspect of creation in

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[60] Most recently: Marvin A. Sweeney, "Micah's debate with Isaiah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 93 (2001): 111-124; Dominic Rudman, "Zechariah 8:20-22 and Isaiah 2:2-4//Micah 4:2-3: a study in intertextuality," *Biblische Notizen* 107-108 (2001): 50-4; Bernard Gosse, "Michée 4,1-5, Isaïe 2,1-5 et les rédacteurs finaux du livre d'Isaïe," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 105.1 (1993): 98-102.

[61] Cf. under 3.1.4. with regard to the usage of the Mount Zion metaphor.

[62] In order for that to take place there needs to be the preceding destruction as expressed in Mic 1:3-4.

[63] For a discussion of God's mountain as creation motif, cf. Paas, *Creation & Judgement*, 94-7.

demonstrating the inter-connection of God's creation and his intervention in history, placing it in the context of Israel's election.[64] Isa 5:12 provides a further insight into Isaiah's creation theology: sin is in reality not acknowledging God's deeds in creation.

In Isa 17:7 the prophet takes up the theme developed by Hosea of Yahweh as the 'Maker' of humankind. The image of Yahweh as the potter of Isa 29:16 has already been identified above as creation terminology and occurs in all three divisions of the book (Isa 41:25; 45:9; 64:8). Creation in Isaiah focuses primarily on God's sovereignty over his creation and humankind's failure to recognize his proper position within this world-order.

Isa 40-55 has been called the center of Isaiah's theology whereas Isa 36-39 fulfills a bridging role carefully linking the previous chapters to the remainder of the book.[65] It has been argued that the so-called Deutero-Isaiah introduces creation as a new theological topic to the book, but the preceding observations show that the theme is "deeply continuous with the Isaian tradition".[66] While creation terminology abounds in the whole book,[67] creation occurs in Is 40-55 in connection with the Exodus and Conquest (Isa 41:17-20; 42:13-17; 43:16-21; 49:8-12), placing creation in history. Furthermore, creation is positioned alongside redemption (Isa 44:24) pointing to the theological significance of the motif in introducing Cyrus as the agent of God's redemption. In this way, the Exodus serves as a typological guarantee for the future redemption from the Babylonian exile through Cyrus (Isa 44:28). The theocentric manifestation that God forms light and creates darkness as much as peace and evil (Isa 45:7) serves as an introduction to the God as a potter metaphor (Isa 45:9-13) which illustrates the absolute sovereignty of God within the realms of human history.[68]

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[64] The key-verb נטע, "to plant," (Is 5:2, 7) points to Yahweh as the planter of a garden reminiscent of his activity in creation where he "planted a garden in the east, in Eden" (Gen 2:8).

[65] Cf. Clifford, "Unity of the Book of Isaiah," 2.

[66] Ibid., 16.

[67] For example, ברא, "to create": Isa 4:5; 40:26, 28; 41:20; 42:5; 43:1, 7, 15; 45:7-8, 12, 18; 48:7; 54:16; 57:19; 65:17-18.

[68] The view of God also being responsible for the creation of evil fits well within the theocentric Hebrew worldview and forestalls any notions of dualism. Cf. George F. Knight, *Servant Theology. A Commentary on the Book of Isaiah 40-55* (International Theological Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 90. See also Deroche who concludes: "Isa. xlv 7, on the other hand, is part of a prophetic oracle the purpose of which is to reassure the reader (listener?) that Yahweh is in control of the events shaping world history, in this

The final division of the book of Isaiah (Isa 56-66) focuses on the creation of Zion with Is 60-62 at the center of the section describing the glorious city. The book's grand finale in Isaiah 65-66 adds an eschatological dimension to creation theology in Isaiah describing renewal and restoration in terms of creation. But creation in these last chapters does not only refer to Zion as a place, but foremost to its inhabitants who need re-creation and transformation: "But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy" (Isa 65:18).

Summarizing Isaian creation theology, the following becomes apparent. Creation in Isaiah 1-39 is focused on God's sovereignty over his creation and the establishment of a personal relationship with humanity, exemplified by the usage of the potter metaphor which points back to Gen 2. In Isaiah 40-55 the theme focuses on the creation of Israel as a nation in history by connecting creation with the Exodus and theologically with salvation. In Isaiah 56-66 creation is centered on the future re-creation of Zion and its people in response to the failure of a pre-exilic Israel. Thus, we have a sequential development of creation theology in the book of Isaiah which follows a natural progression of thought.

3.2. Seventh-century Prophets

A new century in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament is overshadowed by the sobering perspective of the fall of Samaria (722 BC) and an increasing urgency for the prophetic message to be heard as the Babylonian exile is approaching. As during the eighth-century, the prophetic word is inaugurated by an international message, issued by Nahum against the Assyrians. Habakkuk enters with God into a dialogue about his people, while Zephaniah and Joel enlarge upon the eschatological meaning of the 'day of the Lord' motif. Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, finally fails in averting with his message the Babylonian exile.

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particular case the events surrounding the rise of Cyrus and the fall of the Babylonian empire. The oracle achieves its goal by reminding the reader that there is no god but Yahweh (vss 5-6), and that he is the creator (vs. 7)." Michael Daroche, "Isaiah XLV 7 and the Creation of Chaos?" *Vetus Testamentum* 42.1 (1992): 20.

3.2.1. Nahum

Creation in Nahum is connected to the 'day of the Lord' and the description of its characteristics is reminiscent of creation terminology: "He rebukes the sea and dries it up; he makes all the rivers run dry. Bashan and Carmel wither and the blossoms of Lebanon fade. The mountains quake before him and the hills melt away. The earth trembles at his presence, the world and all who live in it" (Nah 1:4-5). Again there is a context of de-creation which is driven by cosmological imagery. In the judgement theophany the created order is impacted by its own creator in a way that is reminiscent of the Ancient Near Eastern *Chaoskampf* motif whereas there is a polemic reworking of the motif with Yahweh being depicted as sovereign over all the common Ancient Near Eastern power symbols such as the sea, the mountains and earth.[69]

3.2.2. Habakkuk

Habakkuk offers a similar perspective on creation as Nahum in using creation imagery in the context of de-creation during the theophany in the 'day of the Lord': "He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed. His ways are eternal" (Hab 3:6). In the following verses Habakkuk describes the impact of Yahweh's appearance on creation (Hab 3:7-12). However, through the destructive power of de-creation, salvation is accomplished: "You came out to deliver your people, to save your anointed one" (Hab 3:13). Along the same lines, creation imagery also serves as a point of reference for recognition of the creator: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab 2:14).

3.2.3. Zephaniah

As observed above, Zeph 1:3 introduces a reversal of creation by listing the animals in a reversed order as they were originally mentioned in the creation account from Gen 1.[70] He furthermore uses the familiar word-play between אָדָם, "man" and אֲדָמָה, "ground" known from Gen 2:7. However,

[69] Cf. my study of Ps 29 where I discuss the polemic nature of the *Chaoskampf* motif in the Psalms. Martin G. Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven. God as a Warrior and as God of Heaven in the Hebrew Psalter and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 169; Fribourg and Göttingen: University Press and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 84-99.

[70] See above under 2.2.1.

the reversal of creation transmits a strong theological message: "In Gen. ii, however, the pun is used to indicate man's dependence on that from whence he came, whereas Zephaniah uses it to show man's separation from his creator, Yahweh. A situation that involves a return to the age before creation can result only in man's destruction."[71] Zephaniah is depicting the progressive loss of dominion over creation by humanity and its resulting de-creation.[72]

Aside from the obvious creation allusions, Zephaniah also refers to another event of the Urgeschichte, i.e., the flood, by using the phrase "from the face of the earth" as an *inclusio* for the passage in Zep 1:1-3 (cf. Gen 6:7; 7:4; 8:8). Within the prophet's message of judgement, the flood serves as an example of present impending doom.[73]

3.2.4. Joel

Within the 'day of the Lord' imagery, Joel employs creation imagery in order to describe the impact of Yahweh's theophany on creation as part of that judgement day: "The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. And the LORD shall roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shall shake; but the LORD will be a refuge unto His people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel" (Joel 3:15-6 [MT 4:15-6]). The mesmerism "heavens and earth" serves as a creation indicator, but again, within a negative context of judgement. The theophanic event is always connected to the experience of God in nature and the impact of his appearance on creation.[74] However, the final verses of Joel return to the topic of re-creation describing the future of Zion in paradisiacal terms: "In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the LORD's house and will water the valley of acacias" (Joel 3:18 [MT 4:18]). The Garden of Eden mentioned earlier on (Joel 2:3) that has been destroyed by the locust plague is thus being re-

[71] Deroche, "Zephaniah I 2-3," 106.

[72] Deroche adds an interesting afterthought: "If Zephaniah knew and used both creation accounts of Genesis (i 1-ii 4a and ii 4b-iii 24), does this not imply that the so-called P account of creation (i 1-ii 4a) is earlier that usually thought, and that Gen. i-iii (and probably all Gen. i-xi) came together as a unit before the seventh century B.C." Ibid., 108.

[73] Cf. Petersen, "World of Creation," 209.

[74] "The employment of theophanic material in prophetic texts is intended to show, in a drastic manner, the motivation for the prophet's message of judgement." Paas, *Creation & Judgement*, 218.

created. Again, a linear motion from creation to de-creation and finally re-creation can be observed with creation being the overall paradigm that underlies history.

3.2.5. Jeremiah

Creation in Jeremiah is so extensively present[75] that we again will have to limit ourselves to a number of key passages. The book begins with reference to the creation of the prophet in his mother's womb (Jer 1:5) using the lexical creation marker יצר, "to form, fashion" which can be found in Gen 2:7. The creation of mankind as part of the creation week is repeated in each new creation of new human life.[76]

A survey of creation in Jeremiah has to include Jer 4:23-26 which connects with strong linguistic markers to the creation account as found in Gen 1. The doom-oracle presents possibly the most faithful account of de-creation, or the reversal of creation, when compared to Gen 1:2-2:4a. The following table adapted from Fishbane shows the progression:[77]

[75] Perdue provides a useful summary of creation theology in Jeremiah, suggesting the following three categories: (1) dialectic of creation and history; (2) creation and destiny of humanity; and (3) wisdom and creation. He comes to the conclusion that a reshaping of Old Testament theology has to take place if creation receives its adequate attention in biblical theology. Leo G. Perdue, *The Collapse of History: Reconstructing Old Testament Theology* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 141-50.

[76] "Göttliche Handlungen, die im jahwistischen Schöpfungsbericht den Beginn der Menschheitsgeschichte markieren, wiederholen sich nach beiden Zeugnissen aus dem Jeremiabuch beim Entstehen eines jeden neuen menschlichen Lebens; denn Jahwe ist der 'Gott allen Fleisches'. . . wie Jer 32,37a formuliert." Helga Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde: ein Beitrag zur Theologie des Jeremiabuches* (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 102; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1981), 13.

[77] Fishbane, "Jeremiah IV 23-26," 152.

Detail	Jeremiah	Genesis
Pre-Creation	*formless and empty* (תֹּהוּ וָבֹהוּ Jer 4:23)	*formless and empty* (וָבֹהוּ תֹהוּ Gen 1:2)
First day	*there was no light* (אוֹר Jer 4:23)	*there was light* (אוֹר Gen 1:3)
Second day	*heavens* (שָׁמַיִם Jer 4:23)	*heavens* (שָׁמַיִם Gen 1:8)
Third day	*earth: mountains quaking and hills swaying* (אֶרֶץ Jer 4:23-24)	*earth: dry land* (אֶרֶץ Gen 1:9-10)
Fourth day		*lights* (מְאֹרֹת Gen 1:14)
Fifth day	*birds had fled* (עוֹף Jer 4:25)	*let birds fly* (עוֹף Gen 1:20)
Sixth day	*there were no people* (אָדָם Jer 4:25)	*let us make man* (אָדָם Gen 1:26)
Seventh day	*cities destroyed before his fierce anger* (חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ Jer 4:26)	*Sabbath* (שָׁבַת Gen 2:2-3)

While the Genesis account ends with a day of rest, the Sabbath, Jeremiah's de-creation account ends with a day of fury. The deconstruction of creation is taking place and one can be sure that the listeners (and subsequent readers) of the prophet's message recognized the creation pattern. Creation becomes the paradigm for destruction and serves as the primeval point of departure for contemporary theology. "What acts and words could be more invested with power than those of creation?"[78]

The antithesis to the doom-oracle is provided in Jer 31:35-37 where two short sayings conclude the Book of Comfort (Jer 30-31) and in creation-language point to the impossibility of Yahweh destroying Israel. Yet it is expressed along the lines of remnant theology with reference to the "seed of Israel" and its future hope. Both apparent opposite expressions, Jer 4:23-26 and Jer 31:35-37 show the range of possible applications of creation theology within Jeremiah, but beyond that show that Israel needs to acknowledge Yahweh with regard to their present future: "Thus both extremes of expression bear witness the theological claim that finally Israel must come to terms with Yahweh upon whom its future well-being solely depends."[79]

[78] Ibid., 153. Brueggemann provides an answer to Fishbane's rhetoric question: "Creation theology here functions to voice a complete, unreserved, elemental negation of all that makes life livable, a negation that could hardly be uttered without such large language." Brueggemann, "Jeremiah," 156.

[79] Ibid., 159.

Jer 10:12-16 is a hymn that celebrates Yahweh's creative power and it is replenished with creation imagery:

> But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding. When he thunders, the waters in the heavens roar; he makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth. He sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses. Everyone is senseless and without knowledge; every goldsmith is shamed by his idols. His images are a fraud; they have no breath in them. They are worthless, the objects of mockery; when their judgment comes, they will perish. He who is the Portion of Jacob is not like these, for he is the Maker of all things, including Israel, the tribe of his inheritance—the LORD Almighty is his name (Jer 10:12-16).

Although most commentators point to the contrast between the true God and the idols, the emphasis is rather on a contrast between Yahweh as the creator of life (Jer 10:13) and humankind as (false) creator of life (Jer 10:14). The focus is not on the idol but on its maker who is "shamed" by his inanimate image, since he is not able to provide the creature with the necessary breath of life which is the distinguishing characteristic of Yahweh's creation.

> Idolatry is therefore a double sin. The worship of idols denies the reality of God's complete control over the cosmos because it involves the acknowledgement of other divine powers.... Worse still is the pretence of creating life. In doing so, humankind lays claim to divine knowledge.[80]

3.3. Sixth- and fifth-century Prophets

The Babylonian exile and post-exilic period brought with it a change in the prophetic message, shifting its contents towards restoration or, speaking within the terminology of the present article, to re-creation. While Ezekiel and Obadiah witness the downfall of Jerusalem, and as such the ultimate fulfillment of the long-prophesied de-creation, Daniel brings an apocalyptic dimension to the topic. Re-creation becomes the prominent topic for post-exilic Haggai and Zechariah, and Malachi finalizes the canonical prophetic chorus of the Old Testament with the restorative message around the Second Eliah.

[80] Rudman, "Creation and Fall," 68.

3.3.1. Ezekiel

Petersen comes to the conclusion that "creation traditions are not important for Ezekiel's theological argument."[81] However, his argument appears to be on the assumption of an exclusive positive reading of the creation account which, as has been seen, forms only one part of the theological panorama for which creation motifs were invoked. If understood in this way, Ezekiel "is not concerned with how the world itself came into existence…, but rather with re-forming a world gone awry".[82] In order to illustrate this, I will focus on three passages that outline Ezekiel's theological usage of creation.

Eze 28:11-19 is a prophetic oracle that centers on a description of the king of Tyre as a type for the anarchic Cherub which has been interpreted since patristic times as pointing to the fall of Lucifer.[83] A number of indicative creation linguistic markers are present,[84] yet the context of the passage is focused on the description of the hubris of a fallen angel that is staining a perfect world. As with Jeremiah, creation language is employed as a powerful paradigm to describe the origin of sin.

Ezek 31:1-18 transfers the same scenario into the realm of human history. The cosmic tree representing human kingship, a motif well-known from ANE iconography,[85] is used as a metaphor for the downfall of the king of Assyria which in turn serves as a warning for Egypt's future judgement. The chapter describes the glory of the tree within creation terminology and cosmology (for example: תְּהוֹם Ezek 31:4 // Gen 7:11) and connects it with paradise (Ezek 31:8-9, 16, 18). Creation terminology is employed to describe the downfall of two prominent nations, Assyria and Egypt. Thus not only paradise has been spoilt but also human history.

Re-creation in Ezekiel and the reversal of de-creation as exemplified by the two previous passages can be found in Ezek 47:1-12 within the context of the vision of the future glory of the temple which in itself serves

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[81] Petersen, "Creation in Ezekiel," 499.

[82] Galambush, "Castles in the Air," 147.

[83] See for example: Jean-Marc Vercruysse, "Les pères de l'église et la chute de l'ange (Lucifer d'après Is 14 et Ez 28)," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 75.2 (2001): 147-74.

[84] For example: ברא, "to create" (Gen 1:1 // Ezek 28:13, 15); עֵדֶן, "Eden" (Gen 2:8, 10, 15 // Ezek 28:13); various gemstones (Gen 2:11-12 // Ezek 28:13); כְּרוּב, "Cherub" (Gen 3:24 // Ezek 28:14, 16).

[85] Othmar Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh. Ancient Near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 261; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

as a creation motif.[86] This time the trees are growing again, not in rebellion against but under Yahweh's power and provision of fertility (Ezek 47:12).[87] The sustaining agents of God's power are the rivers of paradise which connect Ezekiel to the creation account in Gen 2:10-14.[88] Ezekiel deliberately merges temple/Zion with paradise imagery, because the destruction of the earthly temple in Jerusalem and his own exile in Babylon has caused the place of God's presence to transcend to a heavenly realm, indicating that Yahweh's presence is continuous and does not depend on human realities.

> As the connections between Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Genesis 2:10-14 reveal, Ezekiel understood the symbol of Zion in a new way. Cut free from explicit reference to the temporal, political realities of kingship, priesthood, and the earthly temple, the temple-mountain and river of Ezekiel's last great vision stand as timeless symbols of divine presence. For Ezekiel, the earthly Zion, with its city and temple, was a bitter disappointment.[89]

Creation in Ezekiel is used to express his (and the divine) disappointment over angelic rebellion and consequent human history which replays that rebellion again and again, but he moves beyond that in stating that God is able to recreate something new and eternal from the shreds of human history. However, one should be cautious not to attribute an exclusive other-worldliness to the Ezekiel's prophecies.[90]

3.3.2. Obadiah

There is no apparent creation terminology employed in the book of Obadiah except for the usage of the Mount Zion motif (Obad 1:17, 21) which is in juxtaposition to the mountains of Edom (Obad 1:3-4, 8-9). The one who has made his "nest among the stars" (Obad 1:4) will be brought

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[86] Cf. footnote 47.

[87] "Ezekiel's emphasis on trees as signifiers indicating acceptance of or rebellion against divine authority stands in striking contrast with the symbolism of trees elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible." Galambush, "Castles in the Air," 155.

[88] There are significant linguistic creation markers in the text; for example: נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה, "living creature" (Ezek 47:9 // Gen 1:20, 21, 24, 30); שׁרץ, "to swarm" (Ezek 47:9 // Gen 1:20-21)

[89] Steven Tuell, "The Rivers of Paradise," 189.

[90] One should not forget the prophet's vision of the dry bones in Ezek 37 which employs creation terminology in the re-creation of the house of Israel.

low because of human wisdom and understanding (Obad 1:8). Instead, the mountains of Esau will be governed from Mount Zion (Obad 1:21).[91]

3.3.3. Daniel

There are few studies that engage the book of Daniel with creation theology, and those who take up the task usually focus on the mythological *Chaoskampf* motif and its ANE counterparts as found in the description of the waters in Dan 7:2-3.[92] According to Wilson, in contrast to Gen 1, the waters described in Dan 7 are presented as returning to chaos and the animals that surface from the waters, are composite creatures that do not correspond to the order of creation in Gen 1. "The world has reverted to its pre-creation state and is clearly in need of re-creation."[93] This re-creation is achieved in the vision of the Ancient One that constitutes the second part of the vision (Dan 7:9-14) with the word שָׁלְטָן, "dominion" being the key word appearing 8 times in this chapter.[94] The failure of human dominion over the earth in history as ordained in creation is replaced by God's dominion over the universe through an everlasting kingdom.

But aside from Dan 7 there is more on creation in the prophetic book as Doukhan has shown. He approaches the issue from a linguistic perspective and arrives at the conclusion that "les allusions à la creation foisonnent tout au long du livre et sont attestées d'une manière ou d'une autre dans chacun de ses chapitres."[95] In the following I select the most outstanding allusions mentioned by Doukhan.

In Dan 1:12 the four young men opt for a menu which is echoing the pre-fall diet found in Gen 1:29 and the description of Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 2:38 invokes creation terminology applying the same attribute of dominion over the earth and all his creatures to the Babylonian king as Adam received in Gen 1:28. Clay which is part of the stature's feet is used

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[91] Cf. under 3.1.4. with regard to the usage of the Mount Zion metaphor.

[92] See for example: André Lacocque, "Allusions to creation in Daniel 7," in *The book of Daniel: composition and reception. Volume one* (ed. John Joseph Collins and Peter W. Flint; Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 83.1; Formation and interpretation of Old Testament literature 2.1; Leiden ; Boston : Brill, 2001), 114-31.

[93] Wilson, "Creation and New Creation," 201-2.

[94] Dan 7:6, 12, 14 (3x), 26, 27 (2x).

[95] Jacques B. Doukhan, "Allusions à la creation dans le livre de Daniel," in *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings* (ed. Adam S. van der Woude; Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 106; Leuven: University Press and Peeters, 1993), 289.

throughout the Bible within contexts alluding to creation, indicating the religious aspect of the spiritual Rome (cf. Isa 29:16; Jer 18:2; Lam 4:2). The word-pair אוֹר/חֹשֶׁךְ, "darkness/light" in Daniel's benediction (Dan 2:22) is resounding the creation account of Gen 1:4-5. Another creation word-pair (אֶרֶץ/שָׁמַיִם, "heaven/earth") is found in Nebuchadnezzar's prayer after he returns to his senses in Dan 4:35. Furthermore, the usage of the cosmic tree motif in Dan 4 points to the creation account (cf. Gen 2:9). The association of the two segolates עֶרֶב בֹּקֶר, "evening-morning" in Dan 8:14 is found in this sequence and meaning only in the creation story (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). In the concluding chapter of the book, Daniel evokes creation terminology by describing re-creation which is taking place after the de-creation scenario of the previous chapter (Dan 11). For the righteous ones there is a passage from sleeping in the dust (Dan 12:2) to shining like the stars (Dan 12:3) and for Daniel in particular from resting to standing up in the final day to receive his inheritance (Dan 12:13).[96]

The apocalyptic themes of transformation of history and final return to an Edenic state that are so recurrent in the book of Daniel, are theologically grouped along a process from creation to de-creation and finally re-creation, a topic which we have encountered repeatedly in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament, whereas the time-lines in Daniel are broader and informed by his apocalyptic perspective. Eschatology which moves towards an end imperatively necessitates a beginning, and the theme of creation provides the theological rationale against which eschatology can take place.[97]

3.3.4. Haggai

In Hag 1:10 the prophet invokes the heaven/earth mesmerism, demonstrating how the post-exilic community's lack of faithfulness is causing nature's or creation's blessings to be interrupted. Further on Haggai employs the same word-pair in order to describe how the created order is affected by the 'day of the Lord', but this time from a Messianic

[96] Ibid., 286-89.

[97] "L'idée de commencement est conséquente avec celle de 'fin'. L'idée de transformation est contenue dans celle de résurrection. L'idée de déterminisme rejoint celle de contrôle de l'histoire par Dieu. L'idée d'universalisme est impliquée dans la conception cosmique du salud. En fin et surtout, l'idée de souveraineté et de royaume de Dieu qui est centrale dans tout le livre de Daniel, relève de la même pensée que celle du Dieu créateur (Ps 24,1-2, 7-10; cf. Ps 95,3-6)." Ibid., 290-1.

perspective: "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty" (Hag 2:6-7; cf. Hag 2:21-22).

3.3.5. Zechariah

God as the continuous sustainer of creation is described by Zechariah: "Ask the LORD for rain in the springtime; it is the LORD who makes the storm clouds. He gives showers of rain to men, and plants of the field to everyone" (Zech 10:1). The עֵשֶׂב בַּשָּׂדֶה, "vegetation in the field" connects with the עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה, "vegetation of the field" of Gen 2:5. Springtime and fertility are caused by the ongoing process of 'creating' (עשׂה) the rain clouds. Zechariah's second oracle (מַשָּׂא, "utterance, oracle"; cf. 9:1) is introduced by using a distinct creation terminology, however, with a significant rearranging of the various elements: "This is the word of the LORD concerning Israel. The LORD, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the spirit of man within him, declares…" (Zech 12:1). While the 'stretching out of the heavens' is not a direct linguistic creation marker it nevertheless recaptures the action of Gen 1:6-7 and is found throughout the Old Testament (cf. Ps 104:2; Job 9:8; Is 44:24). It is also interesting to note that the object of יצר, "to form" in Zech 12:1 is not man himself as in Gen 2:7, but רוּחַ־אָדָם, "the spirit of man."

> One has the sense that there is a traditional set of creation vocabulary, but that it could be arranged in various acceptable patterns. Heavens, earth, humanity, and spirit provide the crucial building blocks. Zechariah 12:1 combines them into an innovative and adroit manner.[98]

Interestingly, Zech 12:1 serves within the given literary genre as a validation for the following oracle which is a description of Israel's new and victorious role amongst the nations, a new creation of the nation on the day of the Lord.

3.4.1. Malachi

Malachi concludes the cycle of Old Testament prophets with a rhetorical question which parallels God as the creator with the metaphor of

[98] Petersen, "World of Creation," 210.

God as a father: "Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another" (Mal 2:10)? Creation is here being transformed to the intimate level of a father-son relationship, viz. husband-wife (cf. Mal 2:14-15) which echoes the intimate creation account of Gen 2. Creation in the final book of the Old Testament and in its final analysis is not centered on cosmogony but on a personal relationship between God and humankind as exemplified in the order of creation.

5. Summary and Conclusions

In the following synopsis I will mention the most prominent points of each prophet's usage of creation in his writings.

▸8th century prophets				
Jonah	Amos	Hosea	Micah	Isaiah
▸ Ecological content ▸ Jonah's progressive descent reflects a movement away from creation, from life towards death ▸ Obedient creation against disobedient humanity ▸ Reoccurring creation is geared towards salvation	▸ Creation is analogous to history ▸ Creation becomes a paradigm for judgment (de-creation) and salvation (re-creation) ▸ Correct understanding of creation is prerequisite for re-creation	▸ Creation is history ▸ Reversal of creation order in order to portray anti-creation ▸ Creation of Israel as a nation during the Exodus forms part of original creation ▸ Election amounts to creation	▸ Creation focuses on de- and subsequent eschatological re-creation ▸ Mount Zion metaphor as a theological bridge between creation and re-creation	▸ Creation is present throughout the whole book ▸ Creation metaphors like 'maker,' 'potter,' establish a personal relationship ▸ Creation in history serves as a guarantee for redemption ▸ Future re-creation flows out from redemption

In trying to establish the broader lines of creation in the prophetic literature of the 8th century, it becomes apparent that creation is progressively anchored in history, theologically made relevant in salvation, and paradigmatically centered in the introduction of the triad of creation–de-creation–re-creation.

7th century prophets				
Nahum	Habakkuk	Zephaniah	Joel	Jeremiah
▸ Creation terminology is used to describe the 'day of the Lord' ▸ God's sovereignty as Creator over ANE power symbols	▸ Creation as de-creation during the 'day of the Lord' ▸ De-creation is intended to accomplish salvation and recognition of the Creator	▸ Reversal of creation indicates separation between Creator and creature ▸ Progressive de-creation results in loss of dominion over creation ▸ Flood as a type for de-creation	▸ Eschatological de-creation, but redemption for His poeple ▸ Re-creation in paradisiacal terms ▸ Triad: creation – de-creation – re-creation	▸ Strongest account of reversal of creation in prophetic literature ▸ Creation becomes the paradigm for destruction ▸ Remnant theology connects to creation ▸ Contrast between true Creator (Yahweh) and false Creator (idolater)

Creation in the prophetic literature of the 7th century is historically contextualized by the impending Babylonian Exile whereas the triad of creation–de-creation–re-creation becomes more and more prominent with the prophets beginning to look beyond the inevitable judgment towards restoration.

6th - 5th century prophets					
Ezekiel	Obadiah	Daniel	Haggai	Zechariah	Malachi
Focus on reforming a de-created world. De-creation is foreshadowed in the fall of Lucifer. Paradise and human history is stained by the primeval event. Ezekiel's future temple serves in itself as a creation motif. The idealistic character of the future temple transcends the shortcomings of human (Israelite) history.	No explicit creation theology, except for the Mt. Zion motif.	Creation terminology present throughout the book Apocalyptic transforma-tion of history in terms of creation. Eschatology (re-creation) is dependent on protology (creation).	'Day of the Lord' motif with Messianic perspective along creation termino-logy.	Ongoing creation by sustaining of life through fertility and rain. Creative re-arranging of creation termino-logy building blocks in order to describe the re-creation of the nation.	Creation trans-formed onto an intimate personal relation-ship-level. Creation not based on cos-mogony but relation-ship.

The usage of creation during the final two centuries of Old Testament prophetic literature is clearly future-oriented whereas a theological abstraction has taken place that can be related to the disappearance of the physical temple and monarchy. While creation is still the overarching paradigm that spans human history, the focus has moved towards the end

of that arch which, as in the case of the book of Daniel, takes on apocalyptic and also Messianic notions.

Creation in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament is employed as a constant literary and theological reference which connects to a historical past, motivates the interpretation of the present, and moves towards a perspective for the future by means of a continuous contextualization of the topic via the triad creation–de-creation– re-creation. This reference point is anchored in the creation account as presented in Gen 1-3.

> The final authors of the Hebrew Bible understood creation not as one topic among others or even one of lower significance. For them creation was the starting point, because everything human beings can think and say about God and his relation to the world and to humankind depends on the fact that he created all this.[99]

The intertextual markers that refer to creation in the prophets indicate that they saw creation as a literal and historical given whereas reference is made indiscriminately to the creation account as presented in both Genesis 1 and 2. The movement of intertextuality indicates clearly that as much as creation forms the starting point of much of the prophetic theological discourse, all markers of creation as discussed in this paper point back to the creation model as presented in Gen 1-3. While it has not been the purpose of the present paper to reconstruct the cosmology of the Old Testament prophets, it has become apparent that their world-view departed from creation and explained and interpreted the world from this perspective. Any discussion of whether the prophets considered creation other than a historical event or even only used it for literary or theological purposes, cannot be sustained from the textual data and would be projecting a 19th century AD rationalist debate into a first millennium BC context in which it would have not existed otherwise.

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[99] Rendtorff, "Some Reflections on Creation," 207.

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Progressions in the Book of Daniel

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Biblical scholars have noted some progressions characteristics of the book of Daniel. Some of the examples are: "chronological progression" in chapters 1-6 and chapters 7-12,[1] "progression in symbolism" in Dan 8,[2] and "broken numerical sequence (or progression) in Dan 7:25.[3]

The examples mentioned above suggest that there is an apparent literary technique which could be called "progression" in the book of Daniel.[4] This stylistic device has been appealingly demonstrated by a

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[1] John J. Collins, *Daniel with Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature* (Forms of the Old Testament Literature, vol. 20; ed. Rolf Knierim and Gene Tucker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 32. Although there is such progression "in both tales and visions," he emphasized that "the relation between the units is not simply sequential." Ibid.

[2] William H. Shea, "Spatial Dimensions in the Vision of Daniel 8," in *Symposium on Daniel: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 525-526. He stressed that there was not only progression of the "greater importance of the successive actors" in that chapter such as from Persian ram to the Greek goat, to the greater and stronger little horn but also the "progression from the comparative to the superlative" of the language used (i.e., the verb *gādal*, "to become great") in the vision of chap. 8. Ibid.

[3] Zdravko Stefanovic, "The Presence of the *Three and a Fraction*: A Literary Figure in the Book of Daniel," in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, ed. David Merling (Berrien Springs, MI: Institute of Archaeology, Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum, Andrews University, 1997), 201. Stefanovic observes, "[T]he career of the horn is expressed by the progressive order of one, two, and a natural continuation to reach the climax would normally be *three times*. Yet, just before the progression reaches its zenith in number three, the power of the horn is broken into *plg* 'a division' or 'a fraction' (understood as a half) of the time unit." Ibid. Italics his.

[4] Some authors recognized this progression device in some other books of the Bible, for example, Anthony R. Ceresko, *Job 29-31 in the Light of Northwest Semitic: A Translation and Philological Commentary*, Biblica et Orientalia 36 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 205, where he recognized "linear progression" in Job 29-31. Dov Peretz

pioneering study of Yairah Amit.[5] She is the one who proposed the name "progression" and defines it as "gradualist technique"[6] in a given text "wherein the elements are arranged in an ascending or descending order: from general to the particular, or vice versa; from minor to major, or the reverse; from the expected to the unexpected; the impersonal to the personal, and so on."[7] She observes that this literary phenomenon, although mentioned in some studies, yet is either "taken for granted" or not being "discussed any further."[8] Thus, she declares, "we should include progression in the repertoire of the stylistic devices that served the authors of biblical literature."[9] However, the study of progressions had not been throughly pursued yet in the book of Daniel.[10] There are sparse descriptions of progression as mentioned above but no intensive inquiry of progression has been made yet on the entire book of Daniel.

Thus, the present article further pursues this element of progression in the book of Daniel. Different types of progression that are found in the

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Elkins, *The Bible's Top Fifty Ideas: The Essential Concepts Everyone Should Know* (New York: Specialist Press International, 2005), 109, notes, "The Talmud explains that even in the case of other laws, when there was a progression of teaching by God, first to Moses, then to the priests, and afterward to the whole people, this particular supreme command of holiness is taught to the whole people, telescoping the normal sequence into one step so that everyone would hear it simultaneously." U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part II from Noah to Abraham Genesis VI 9 -XI 32* (Jerusalem: The Magness Press, The Hebrew University, 1964), 311, notes that in the Gen 12:1, progression is evident, *from your country and your kindred and your father's house*. Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables of Luke* (Combined edition, two volumes in one; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 23, noted the "progression" in Luke 9:57-62.

[5] Yairah Amit, "Progression as Rhetorical Device in Biblical Literature," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 28/1 (2003):3-32

[6] Ibid., 6.

[7] Ibid., 9. Similarly, progression can be compared to the plot of a biblical narrative which describes the progressive movement of one action to another in a certain story. See, Leland Ryken, *The Literature of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 27, who observes that "plot must have progression as well as conflict. One element of progression in the biblical story is the unfolding of God's purposes throughout history."

[8] Amit, 4.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Alison Lo, "Device of Progression in the Prologue of Job," *Biblische Notizen* 130 (2006):31-43, inspired by Amit's study on progression demonstrates the same rhetorical technique in the introductory parts of the book of Job.

book of Daniel will also be clarified and illustrated in this study. After demonstrating the appearances of this certain literary contrivance in each chapter of the book of Daniel, its role for each chapter has also been described. General implications of this progression to the book of Daniel are given at the conclusion of this study.

Narrative Section of Daniel

Dan 1

In this chapter we can see the progression of Daniel's position from being a captive, to being a student, and to being a royal officer. Together with other Hebrew young men, Daniel was chosen among those captives (1:6) to be trained in the royal capacity. We see, at the end of their training, Daniel's position together with the three Hebrew young men, was elevated in the sense that the king had found out that they were ten times better than all his wise men in the kingdom (1:20).

Moreover, the mention of the three names of kings, such as Jehoiakim and Nebuchadnezzar at the beginning of the chapter, and the name of Cyrus at the end of the chapter indicates a progressive movement of the period from which Daniel lived. Daniel lived through the time of Jehoiakim, of Nebuchadnezzar up to the time of Cyrus—from the kingdom of Judah to the Babylonian and the Persian kingdom.

Both progressions described above move toward a certain direction—a definitive end. The end of the captivity and the Babylonian kingdom are the directions of those progressions. The defeat of the Babylonians in their own ground when the captives were found ten times wiser than their Babylonian peers is being highlighted (Dan 1:20).[11] Similarly, it stresses the fall of Babylon when Daniel "remained there until the first year of king Cyrus" (Dan 1:21).[12] Daniel "lived to see the fall of Babylon."[13] This sets the book of Daniel into a progressive movement of one kingdom to another

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[11] Zdravko Stefanovic, *Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise: Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2007), 73.

[12] All scriptural references cited here are from the New International Version, unless otherwise stated.

[13] Robert A. Anderson, *Signs and Wonders: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (International Theological Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 8.

that will positively affect the unfortunate condition of the exiles in Babylon.

Dan 2

At the outset of this chapter, we can see that Nebuchadnezzar was worried because of the troubling content of the dreams. To know the real import of the dream he called all his wise men not only to interpret the dream but to divulge the dream itself.[14] In the process of the negotiations between the wise men and the king, one can see the progression of Nebuchadnezzar's command. We can schematically diagram the progression of the command of the king in this way:

(A) I want to know the dream (v. 3)

(B) Tell me the dream and interpret it for me (v. 6)

(C) Tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me (v. 9)

One can note that the demand to tell the dream progresses based on this diagram. This progression of the demand was intensified when the king finally pronounced a death decree. The delay of the wise men, through repeated appeals, hastened and intensified the pronunciation of the death sentence. Such a harsh decree may seem reasonable from the standpoint of the king, for he thought that the wise men "have conspired to tell" him "misleading and wicked things, hoping the situation will change" (2:9). Not only did the king accuse his wise men of conspiracy but also accuse them of making delaying tactics.[15]

The progression of the command of Nebuchadnezzar ends in the pronouncement of judgment, that is, a death decree. All the wise men were commanded to be summarily executed (Dan 2:12, 13).

Daniel's interpretation of the king's dream, which shows the sequence of the different metal kingdoms and the symbolism used to portray such succession, is noteworthy. One can see the progression or increase of strength of the elements mentioned in the text—from gold to iron. Although one can view these elements as indication of the deterioration of

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[14] To know whether Nebuchadnezzar forgot his dream or not based on the contextual and linguistic study, see, Ferdinand O. Regalado, "The Meaning of אזדא in Daniel 2:5, 8 and Its Implications for Nebuchadnezzar's Dream," *DavarLogos* 4/1 (2005): 17-37.

[15] Gleason L. Archer, Jr., "Daniel," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 7:41.

one world kingdom to another (from more precious to the less precious metals), yet one can also view them in another perspective. This could be seen as a progression of the strength of the different metals involved, from a very fragile metal of gold to the harder metal of iron.[16] This is indicated by the Aramaic word, תַּקִּיף ("strong," 2:40) attributed to the iron kingdom. However, both perspectives can be acceptable for both views express movement or flow which is also one of the features of progression. As Shea puts it: "the metals of the image in [Daniel] chapter 2 are listed in order of descending value but increasing strength. Thus the gold of the head represents the wealth of the first kingdom while the iron of the legs represents the might and power of the fourth kingdom."[17]

Dan 3

There are a number of conceptual progressions in this chapter. Firstly, the progression of the way the furnace was heated. Accordingly, it has been ordered to heat it "seven times hotter than usual" (3:19). Secondly, there is also a progression of the number of persons inside the burning furnace—from three individuals to four individuals. Thirdly, there is a progression of the decree of King Nebuchadnezzar; from the decree to worship the golden image he set up in one locality in Babylon to the decree to worship the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego throughout the province of Babylon. Fourthly, there is a progression of the status of the three Hebrews. Earlier in their lives, the three worthy Hebrews "*were* in the province of Babylon, now they *prosper* in the province of Babylon."[18] These Hebrew young men "come out of the ordeal enriched."[19] Indeed, these three Hebrews moved from one situation in life to another, that is, from being thrown (v. 20) into the blazing furnace to being promoted (v.

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[16] Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 21 (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1978), 93, notes that "the firmness of this kingdom, represented by the iron, is emphasized, suggesting an enforced policy."

[17] William H. Shea, "The Unity of Daniel," in *Symposium on Daniel: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, 1986), 174.

[18] Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dream of a Jewish Prince in Exile* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 57. Italics his.

[19] Ibid.

30) in the province of Babylon. The movement is very clear—from the descending to the ascending status in life. Such kind of progression ends this chapter in a positive tone.

Dan 4

In this chapter, a progression could be seen in the continuous growth of the tree that Nebuchadnezzar had dreamt about. In the dream, the tree kept on growing and became stronger. This is indicated by the words used, such as "to grow great and strong" (רְבָה וּתְקִף). According to the text, the tree "grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth" (4:11). But as it is logically expected to grow more, then suddenly a watcher, a holy one from heaven (v.13) is commanded to cut it down. Here is an example which could be reasonably called "a broken progression." The broken progression delineated in this chapter implies the concept of judgment. But the judgment is not a total judgment. The "stump and its roots" (4:15) have to remain in the ground. There is an element of hope at the end of such progression. In any case, the movement of the broken progression is directed toward the theme of judgment. Such judgment flows out from heaven.

Dan 5

At the beginning of the narrative of this chapter, one can see the progression of Belshazzar's act that lead to the verdict of his doom. He was not merely satisfied in drinking wine in the banquet but "went beyond"[20] it by using the sacred vessels looted from the temple in Jerusalem "as receptacles from which to drink alcohol."[21] By doing that particular blasphemous act, Belshazzar brought himself to his own downfall. The progression of his downfall is fittingly summarized by the inscriptions written on the wall, מְנָא מְנָא תְקֵל וּפַרְסִין. The idea of progression depicted here may not be in the ascending but in the descending order. Accordingly, "the four words can be read as names of weights listed in a descending order."[22] The equivalent measures of weight

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[20] William H. Shea, *Daniel 1-7: Prophecy as History*, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1996), 85.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Stefanovic, "The Presence of the *Three and a Fraction*," 200. See also Baldwin, 123-24.

is this: "mina, shekel, half (as it might be 'ton, hundredweight, quarter')."[23] In any case, the fact that there is a movement or flow, which can be characterized as progression, attest to an idea that there is indeed a literary progression in this chapter. The movement of the progression of the narrative ends at God's judgment, which results to the end of the Babylonian kingdom.

Dan 6

In this chapter, one can see the progression of King Darius' two decrees. The progression can be seen in terms of the nature of the decree—from his initial decree to pray (בְּעָא) solely to him alone for thirty days to his second edict "to fear and tremble" (זְאֵעִין וְדָחֲלִין) before the living God of Daniel.[24] Another progressive movement in the decree is also apparent in terms of the object of worship. The object of worship and reverence in the first decree was Darius, while in the second it was God. The level of progression is clear: from human as the object of worship to God. Again, it is noticeable that the direction of the progression in this chapter is toward God.

Prophetic Section of Daniel

Dan 7

One can notice that there is a progression of the different beasts in the vision in Daniel 7. The progression is in the alternating sequence. There appears to be an ABB^1A^1 pattern of these different beasts in terms of their characteristics and descriptions. The first beast is parallel to the third beast, while the second beast is parallel to the fourth beast. The ABB^1A^1 pattern can be diagramed in this way:

A Beast like a lion (7:4)	**A^1** Beast like leopard (7:6)
1. with eagle's wings (presumably two)	1. with four wings of a bird
2. wings were torn off	2. torn off wings not mentioned
3. no heads mentioned	3. four heads

[23] Baldwin, 124.

[24] The last command is for "all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language who were living in all the land" (Dan 6:25, NASB).

B Beast like bear (7:5)	**B**[1] The fourth beast (7:7)
1. it has teeth	1. iron teeth
2. no horns mentioned	2. it has ten horns
3. no claws mentioned	3. bronze claws (7:17)

From the outline above, one can observe the progression of elements from the lionlike beast in **A** to the leopardlike beast in **A**[1]. From presumably two wings of the lionlike beast to four wings of the leopardlike beast; from no head mentioned on the lionlike beast to four heads on the leopardlike beast. A similar progression can be found in the elements and characteristics from the bearlike beast in **B** to the fourth beast in **B**[1]. The bearlike beast is mentioned to have teeth without description, while the fourth beast has iron teeth. The bearlike beast is not mentioned with horns, while the fourth beast is mentioned with ten horns. The bearlike beast has no claws, while the fourth beast has bronze claws. These are examples of progression of elements among the four beasts mentioned in this chapter.

The language used to describe the fourth as "terrifying and frightening and very powerful" (Dan 7:7) suggests a progression of strength from the other beasts. The Aramaic word תַּקִּיף ("strong") attributed to the fourth beast, which is also used in Dan 2:40, suggests such progression.

In addition to the above progression, the manner in which the little horn is portrayed in the text appears to be in progression: from being small to becoming great. Accordingly, the little horn "was larger in appearance than its associates" (Dan 7:20, NASB). The little horn's characteristics of speaking boastfully against the Most High, oppressing the saints, and changing the set times and laws (Dan 7:25), indicate that there is indeed a progression of this little horn both in vertical and horizontal level. There appears to be progression also concerning the time period the little horn was given to wear out the saints of the Most High: He progressed for "time, times, and half a time" (Dan 7:25). In this time period of "expected progression, one, two, three is cut off arbitrarily but decisively."[25] In the time the expected progression is cut off, the kingdom was given to the people of the saints of the Most High. This kingdom will not just reign for a certain period of time but will last forever.

[25] Baldwin, 146.

Dan 8

The strength progression of the different beasts in Daniel 7 is also found in this chapter. The strength of the ram was surpassed by the strength of the male goat in that the male goat defeated and struck down the ram. The progression of the strength of male goat is confirmed by its description as the one who "became very great" (הִגְדִּיל עַד־מְאֹד, Dan 8:8). However, the progression continues. After the reign of the male goat there comes a little horn "which started small but grew in power" (Dan 8:8) and also "became very great" (Dan 8:9), even to the point of reaching the host of heavens and "threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them" (Dan 8:10). But at the height of his greatness and progress, the little horn "will be destroyed, but not by human power" (Dan 8:25). The progression of the little horn was broken, and thus can be called "broken conceptual progression." Indeed, progression of terms and concepts in this chapter are very apparent.

Dan 9

There is a numerical progression that can be found in this chapter. The numbers mentioned of the prophecy progress from 70 weeks (9:24) to 62 weeks (9:25). Then the next number is one week (9:27). And then the number was broken in the sense that the number in the middle of the week is split up, that is, the half of the one week (9:27). The numerical progression that can be found in this chapter are the numbers 70, 62, one week, and half of the week. Also there is a decrease progression of the two numbers of 70. In this chapter, 70 years of exile (as prophesied by prophet Jeremiah) is introduced first. Then 70 weeks prophecy is mentioned next. So there is a descending numerical progression from 70 years to 70 weeks.

However, prophetically speaking, the progression is actually not in the descending type of progressions but an ascending type of progression. "The seventy years usher in a period of time that will consist of seventy weeks of years, or 490 years. The period of ten sabbatical cycles is enlarged here to ten jubilee cycles."[26] "Gabriel's words point to a new period decreed by God that would be much longer than the seventy years of the exile."[27]

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[26] Stefanovic, *Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise*, 359.

[27] Ibid.

It has been observed also that there is a literary progression here in the way God will forgive the sins of his people during this seventy prophetic years (9:24). "The transgressions will come to a stop, be 'sealed,' and completely forgiven" (9:24) were considered as "three statements that comprise a literary progression."[28]

One can also observe a conceptual progression in this chapter–starting from the idea of the desolation of Jerusalem (9:2) to the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem (9:25). In other words, the conceptual flow of this chapter is from the prophecy of the desolation to the prophecy of the restoration of the city of Jerusalem—from Jeremiah's prophecy of desolation to Gabriel's revelation of restoration.

Dan 10

One can observe the progression of the mention of princes in this chapter. It started from the prince of Persia (10:13, 20) to the prince of Greece who will come afterward (10:20). In addition to these earthly princes, a prince named Michael (Dan 10:12, 13) is also mentioned. Michael is described as "your prince" (Dan 10:21), which appears to be "the prince of Israel."[29] Thus, three princes introduced in this chapter: Prince of Persia, Prince of Greece, and Michael the Prince. The mentioned of these three different princes ends to the higher and much better prince—the prince of princes. The progression is moving toward God in the sense that Michael the prince belongs to the realm of God and not to the earthly realm.

Dan 11

In this chapter, there is a progression of one king to another king (11:2-4). The conceptual progression of different kings is accentuated by its linguistic hints. Three kings from Persia will appear (11:2) but the fourth one will be wealthier than the others (יַעֲשִׁיר עֹשֶׁר־גָּדוֹל מִכֹּל וְהִרְבִיעִי, 11:2). Then the scene does not end with the fourth king but continues to another king which is, at this time, described as a "mighty

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[28] Ibid.

[29] John J. Collins, *Daniel, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees with an Excursus on the Apocalyptic Genre* (Old Testament Message: A Biblical-Theological Commentary; vol. 16; edited by Carroll Stuhlmueller and Martin McNamara; Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1981), 100. See also, Stefanovic, *Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise*, 391.

king" (מֶלֶךְ גִּבּוֹר, 11:3). The progression is apparent, it goes from three kings, to a richer king, and finally to the mighty king. However, the progression is broken when the empire of the mighty king is broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, that is, toward the four directions of the compass.

A broken numerical progression could also be seen in the first four verses in the chapter. The first three kings of Persia is mentioned, followed by the fourth one who is richer, then followed by the fifth mighty king from Greece. At the height of the powerful kingdom of the fifth king, one can expect the continuation of progression. But the progression is broken when the next king after the fifth one was broken and split into four parts.

Dan 12

There are three verbs in the first four verses of this chapter which show verbal progression. These are the verbs arise, deliver, sleep, awake, shine, and go. Michael will arise (12:1) at the time of conflict described in Dan 11 which will cause deliverance to those people whose names are written in the book, then the multitudes will sleep and will awake (12:2), and finally many will go to increase knowledge (12:4). However, it appears persuasively that three main verbs are dominant in these first four verses; they are: arise, rest, and go. So the verbal progression of arising, resting, and going is based on these three dominant verbs. This kind of progression is being reversed in the last verse of Dan 12. Daniel was told by the angel to go, and then will rest, and will rise in the end (12:13).

Numerical progression in this chapter is also found: from time, times and half a time, which is equivalent to 1,260 prophetic days (12:7), to 1,290 days (12:11), up to 1,335 days (12:12). It is apparent that there is an increase of numbers mentioned in those verses. The numerical progression continues upward. It was neither broken nor divided. Thus, it seems that chapter 12 of Daniel ends in a positive progression.

Conclusion

Different types of progression found in the selected chapters in the book of Daniel are conceptual, numerical, verbal, and literary. The narrative of chapters 1-6 shared a similar apocalyptic worldview with the prophetic parts in the sense that both sections shared the same end of the progressions. The progressions either end in a theme of judgment or more

toward God or to the realm of God.[30] Could we safely say then that the narrative part of Daniel mirrors the apocalyptic ends of the prophetic part? Our study also betrays the eschatological emphasis of the book of Daniel.[31] This eschatological emphasis is seen in the development of the different earthly kingdoms climaxing to the kingdom of God. Such characteristic of Daniel points to one of its descriptions as the book of the "end."[32] In other words, the progression found in the book starts from the period of the writer to the end of the world.

Likewise, the progressions found in our study lend further support to the literary beauty of the book of Daniel. If an attentive reader could see the pattern of progressions in this book, then, he or she can only appreciates its literary beauty and its message, as well. The message is clear that progress in the biblical perspective is not the progress toward the zenith of success of world kingdoms but progress that ends in the kingdom of God.[33] A utopian world envisioned by humans is not the climax of the progress of this world from the perspective of God; it is the ushering in of the kingdom of God here on earth.

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[30] It has been noted that "the historical section of the book of Daniel is one which is a step-by-step progression [that] continually vindicates Yahweh." Zdravko Stefanovic, "Daniel: A Book of Significant Reversals," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 30 (1992):146.

[31] See for example, among others, John J. Collins, "Genre, Ideology and Social Movement in Jewish Apocalypticism," in *Mysteries and Revelation*, eds. John J. Collins and J. H. Charlesworth, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 9 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991); idem, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 1-42, 85-115.

[32] See Gerhard Pfandl, *The Time of the End in the Book of Daniel*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series, vol. 1 (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992); idem, "Daniel's 'Time of the End'," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 7/1 (1996): 141-158.

[33] The purpose of this progression is, probably, to heighten the emphasis on the ushering in of the kingdom of God in the final period of world history as depicted in the book of Daniel at the same time to reveal "God's purposes throughout history" (Ryken, 27) in the book.

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Archaeology and the Interpretation of John's Gospel: A Review Essay

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The Gospel of John is at once the most influential and the most controversial writing in the New Testament. On one hand, its unique and profound theology has been decisive in shaping the church's understanding of the person of Jesus Christ. On the other, it has been accused more than any other Gospel of possessing no real value in the search for the historical Jesus. A number of archaeological discoveries, however, has called such a negative assessment into question. Though archaeology will never be able to prove the historicity of the particular events recorded in this Gospel, and much less to establish John's theological statements on the basis of verifiable data, some of its findings have thrown considerable light on the historical and cultural setting of the Gospel and, as such, have caused many scholars to rethink the way John's message should be interpreted. This is the subject of the present article, which is divided into three parts: part one synthesizes how the distinctive traits of John have been understood in modern times; part two reviews the most significant archaeological discoveries related to this Gospel; and part three describes the influence of such discoveries on current Johannine research. Due to the more informative nature of this essay, no extensive bibliography should be expected, neither a critical assessment of all the questions involved. Similarly, despite the major role played by archaeology and the Fourth Gospel itself in the so-called Third Quest for the

historical Jesus, also known as Jesus Research, no attempt is made to relate the discussion to specific issues of that quest.[1]

Modern Interpretation of John

All four Gospels in the New Testament tell the story of Jesus, but not the same way. Each evangelist presents a different portrait of Jesus.[2] However, the differences among the first three Gospel, which report a considerable amount of common traditions about Jesus, are not as significant as the differences between them and John. Though sharing the basic outline of Jesus' ministry, as well as some sayings and incidents, John places Jesus' ministry mostly in Judea, not in Galilee, reports at least three Passovers attended by Jesus in Jerusalem, instead of only one, and omits several important episodes of Jesus' life, such as his birth, baptism, transfiguration, exorcism of demons, and agony in Gethsemane. The last supper and the prophetic discourse are also missing. Another difference is the portrait of Jesus himself. Important emphases in John, such as Jesus' full divinity and

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[1] The Third Quest is the study of the historical Jesus which began around 1980, following the old and the new quests. Both the Old Quest (1774-1906) and the New Quest (1953-1970) were clearly motivated by theological concerns. The Third Quest (Jesus Research), on the other hand, shifted the focus (and the method) completely. Led by a wide variety of experts, whether Christians or Jews, Catholics or Protestants, liberals or conservatives, it does not follow any theological agenda per se, but consists in a scientific study of Jesus against the Jewish background of his life and ministry, and in light of all relevant data. For the first time the study of texts, which include the Gospel of John with its remarkable historical, architectural, and topographical information, is assisted by a systematic examination of archaeology and topography. For a short introduction to the Third Quest, see Darrell L. Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 141-152. More comprehensive guides include: Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); Ekkehard Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century*, trans. O. C. Dean (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002). A helpful introductory discussion with detailed and up-to-date bibliographic information is found in James H. Charlesworth, *The Historical Jesus: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008).

[2] See esp. Richard A. Burridge, *Four Gospels, One Jesus?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994). For a more condensed discussion, see Richard A. Burridge and Graham Gould, *Jesus Now and Then* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 47-68.

pre-existence, are virtually absent from the Synoptics. The Johannine Jesus does not use parables or short sayings, but preferably long and thoughtful discourses. He is also constantly using words that are scarcely used in the other Gospels (e.g., love, to love, truth, true, to know, to work, world, to abide, to judge, to send, to witness) and likes speaking of himself metaphorically as the bread of heaven, the true vine, the good shepherd, the door, and the light of the world.[3] Most significant, however, are the miracles of Jesus, which in John seem to be more extraordinary than those reported by the other evangelists.[4] New Testament scholar Ernst Käsemann is correct when he says of the Fourth Gospel: "Judged by the modern concept of reality, our Gospel is more fantastic than any other writing of the New Testament."[5]

Until the mid-eighteenth century, such differences represented no problem for most Bible interpreters. Being the work of John, the beloved disciple and a leading figure in the apostolic church, it was generally thought that his account of Jesus was more personal and therefore more authoritative than the others'. Mark and Luke were not eyewitnesses of the events they recorded, and Matthew, though being one of the twelve, never achieved the prominence that John did. Taking John as the starting point, it was then possible to harmonize the Gospels and so to minimize their differences.[6] In 1776, however, J. J. Griesbach broke off from such an approach, contending that all four Gospels cannot be treated together. In his Synopsis of the Gospels, he ignored the Gospel of John almost completely and simply placed

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[3]A full list of vocabulary and other literary differences can be found in C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 5-9.

[4] For more details on the differences between John and the Synoptics, see D. Moody Smith, *John among the Gospels*, 2d ed. (Columbia: University of South Caroline Press, 2001), 1-11.

[5] Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17*, trans. Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 45.

[6] For examples spanning from Augustine to the time of Reformation, see Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Collection and Origin of the Canonical Gospels*, trans. John Bowden (Harrisburg: Trinity International, 2000), 22-24.

together the parallel accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke for the purpose of comparison.[7]

The separation of John's Gospel from the others was not in itself hermeneutically wrong, but once separated, its differences and peculiarities came to the fore right at a time when the Enlightenment was starting to impact biblical interpretation. For one thing, newer and more critical approaches to the Bible were felt necessary, particularly in relation to the use and handling of historical evidence, which were entirely distorted, to say the least, especially because of the old theory of verbal inspiration and inerrancy of every part of Scripture. For another thing, biblical interpretation was made hostage of a radical rationalism, that is, the rejection of any form of supernaturalism and the consequent abandonment of the very notion of inspiration itself, so that ultimately the Bible became nothing more than an ancient document to be studied as any other ancient document.[8]

As a result, the authenticity of John's Gospel came under heavy fire. In the eyes of rationalist Bible scholars, stories like the marriage-feast of Cana and the raising of Lazarus could not be true, implying that the fourth evangelist could not have been an eyewitness of the events he describes. One of the first attacks came already in 1792 by Edward Evanson, who referred to the miracle in Cana as "incredible" and "unworthy of belief." [9] If the Fourth Gospel was not history (biography) or an account historically reliable, what was it then? It did not take long for the alternatives to appear.

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[7] This is how the term "Synoptics" came to be used as a reference to those Gospels only. In New Testament studies, it conveys the idea that Matthew, Mark, and Luke can be arranged or viewed side by side, like in parallel columns, and be easily compared by means of a synopsis, as they report the same general outline for the story of Jesus. See esp. C. M. Tuckett, "Synoptic Problem," *ABD*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:263-270, and Robert H. Stein, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels: Origin and Interpretation*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 17-25.

[8] Griesbach himself operated from a historicist perspective, believing that "the New Testament must be explained as every ancient book is explained" (William Baird, *History of New Testament Research*, vol. 1, *From Deism to Tübingen* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 139. Cf. David Laird Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem: The Canon, the Text, the Composition, and the Interpretation of the Gospels,* ABRL [New York: Doubleday, 1999], 309-326).

[9] See John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 15-16.

In 1835, D. F. Strauss introduced the term "myth" to describe the content of John; other terms that were used in the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth include "idea," "philosophy," "allegory," and "theology."[10] Whatever the term, the idea was the same: the Gospel of John was not the personal testimony of an eyewitness, the best loved of Jesus' disciples, and its account should not be taken historically. The modern mind could no longer accept at the mere historical level what was felt to be nothing else but the expression of a religious idea in concrete form by an ancient writer.

The notion that John's Gospel was not history but was written to convey a theological idea found a creative expression in F. C. Baur, in the mid-nineteenth century. For Baur, John was not an apostolic document, but a post-Pauline Christian reflection whose purpose was to promote the concept of a unified (Catholic) church. As such, it could not have been written before the second half of the second century, and, of course, was not historically reliable. "The Johannine Gospel," he said, "from beginning to end . . . has no concern for a purely historical account, but for the presentation of an idea which has run its ideal course in the march of events of the Gospel story."[11] Although Baur's positions were too artificial and exegetically indefensible, his influence on subsequent Johannine scholarship was remarkable. The so-called Tübingen school, of which he was the leading figure, dominated the scene for an entire generation.[12] At the turn of the twentieth century, only a few conservative interpreters still held the traditional view that this Gospel was the testimony John the son of Zebedee.[13]

Another blow against the historicity of John was struck with the arrival of the religio-historical school, in the late nineteenth century. Attempting to

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[10] Ibid., 36.

[11] Ferdinand C. Baur, *Kritische Untersuchungen über die kanonischen Evangelien: Ihr Verhältnis zueinander, ihren Charakter und Ursprung* (Tübingen: Fues, 1847), 239. See further, Peter C. Hodgson, *The Formation of Historical Theology: A Study of Ferdinand Christian Baur* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 212-213.

[12] As late as 1959, Johannes Munck would still regard the historical results of the Tübingen school as valid (*Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, trans. Frank Clarke [London: SCM, 1959], 69-70).

[13] On Strauss and Baur, who had been Strauss' teacher at two different establishments, see Werner Georg Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, trans. S. McLean Gilmour and Howard C. Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 120-161.

tie the rise and growth of all religions to purely naturalistic and historical causations, this school affirmed that Christianity was nothing more than one phenomenon among the many religious phenomena of the Hellenistic world. As such, John's theology and concepts were explained in the light of other contemporary religions, like mystery religions and Gnosticism. Still using the basic scheme provided by Baur, Otto Pfleiderer, the founder of the religio-historical school, maintained that the Gospel of John did not belong "to the historical books of primitive Christianity, but to its Hellenistic doctrinal writings."[14] The Johannine Logos, the light/darkness dualism, the descent/ascent motif, and the Greek term *kyrios* ("Lord") are only some examples of concepts which would have been assimilated when Christianity moved from Palestine and its Jewish environment to the broader Hellenistic world.[15]

These ideas were taken even further by Rudolf Bultmann in the first half of the twentieth century. Brilliant in his reasoning and consistent in the application of the historical-critical method, Bultmann's interpretation of John's Gospel was devastating: John's language, whenever it reflects supernatural categories, was entirely mythological;[16] it is not to be taken on the historical level as a source of information on the life and teaching of Jesus;[17] its conceptual world was not Jewish, but Gnostic; the Redeemer that

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[14] Otto Pfleiderer, *Primitive Christianity: Its Writings and Teachings in Their Historical Connection,* 4 vols., trans. W. Montgomery, (London: Williams & Norgate, 1906-1911), 4:2.

[15] For further information on the religio-historical school, see Kümmel, 206-280.

[16] According to Bultmann, "the cosmology of the New Testament is essentially mythical in character. The world is viewed as a three-storied structure, with the earth in the centre, the heaven above, and the underworld beneath. Heaven is the abode of God and of celestial beings—the angels. The underworld is hell, the place of torment. Even the earth is more than the scene of natural, everyday events, of the trivial round and common task. It is the scene of the supernatural activity of God and his angels on the one hand, and of Satan and his demons on the other. These supernatural forces intervene in the course of nature and in all that men think and will and do" (Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller, 2 vols. [London: SPCK, 1953-1962], 1:1).

[17]In his book *Jesus and the Word* (trans. L. P. Smith and E. H. Lantero [London: Scribner, 1958], which is a critical study of the Synoptics, Rudolf Bultmann specifically notes that "the Gospel of John cannot be taken into account at all as a source for the teaching of Jesus, and it is not referred to in this book" (17).

came from heaven was inspired by the Gnostic myth; the Gospel is not original, but a conflation of several previous documents; it was not written by a single author, but is the result of a composition process in which several editors or redactors were involved; the text as we have it does not make sense and so it needs to be reorganized; and to be understood, it needs to be demythologized by means of an existential interpretation.[18] In other words, almost nothing of the traditional understanding of John was left. Bultmann's radical criticism was so overwhelming that, for a while, it appeared the Gospel would never recover from it.[19]

It is true that not all of Bultmann's ideas gained universal acceptance, even among more radical Johannine scholarship.[20] It is also true that, despite all the challenges, several conservative scholars continued to maintain a more traditional view on John's authorship and date. But, in the first half of the twentieth century, there was a widespread consensus on at least three points: (1) that the fourth evangelist was not a direct eyewitness and therefore had to depend on sources; (2) that his background was not Jewish; and (3) that his Gospel was actually not about the historical Jesus but about the Christ of faith, that is, it is a theological expression of the church's faith late in the second century and read back into the life of Jesus.

But then things began to change, and archaeology played an important role in this change.

Archaeology and John's Gospel

The first archaeological discovery to impact the interpretation of John's Gospel was a small fragment of papyrus, known as Rylands Papyrus 457 and listed among the New Testament manuscripts as P52, measuring only 2

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[18] Rudolf Bultmann's main works on John's Gospel include "Untersuchungen zum Johannesevangelium," ZNW 27 (1928): 113-163; "The History of Religions Background of the Prologue to the Gospel of John," in *The Interpretation of John*, 2d ed., ed. John Ashton, SNTI (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 27-46; and *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971).

[19] Robert T. Fortna even speaks of a kind of "tacit moratorium" in Johannine studies which lasted for several years right after the Second World War as a result of Bultmann's theories (*The Gospel of Signs: A Reconstruction of the Narrative Source Underlying the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970], 1, n.1).

[20] See D. Moody Smith, "Johannine Studies," in *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Eldon J. Epp and George W. MacRae (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), 271-273.

½ by 3 ½ inches and containing a few verses from John 18: parts of vss. 31-33 on the recto, and of vss. 37-38 on the verso. Although it had been acquired in Egypt in 1920 by Bernard P. Grenfell for the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England, it was identified and published only in 1934, by C. H. Roberts. Using paleographical techniques, Roberts dated the fragment to the first half of the second century; most scholars argue for a date no later than A.D. 125.[21]

Despite its size, the significance of this papyrus for the interpretation of John cannot be overemphasized: it is a material evidence that this Gospel was circulating in Egypt already at the beginning of the second century and, as such, it contradicts those theories according to which John as not written until the second half of the second century.[22] This shows, among other things, the inadequacy of Baur's description of earliest Christianity. In fact, not only John but all New Testament documents are now generally assigned to the first century.[23] It is not altogether impossible, thus, that the Fourth Gospel was authored by an eyewitness to Jesus. In any case, it would not be necessarily removed from the world and setting it portrays.

Still, in the first half of the twentieth century several other archaeological discoveries in Palestine seemed to challenge some of the assumptions held at that time by most Johannine scholars. Attention to this matter was called by

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[21]See Jack Finegan, *Encountering New Testament Manuscripts: A Working Introduction to Textual Criticism* (London: SPCK, 1974), 85-90.

[22] "Because of the Rylands Papyrus (P52) particularly, John is generally thought to date no later than 110, and probably a decade or two earlier" (Smith, "Johannine Studies," 272-273). In recent years, some scholars have challenged the traditional date for P52: A. Schmidt argues for a date around 170 AD, plus or minus twenty-five years ("Zwei Anmerkungen zu P. Ryl. III 457," *APF* 35 [1989]: 11-12), and Brent Nongbri criticizes all attempts to establish a paleographic date for papyri like P52 and contends that the date range for this papyrus fragment must be extended to late second and even early third century ("The Use and Abuse of P52: Papyrological Pitfalls in the Dating of the Fourth Gospel," *HTR* 98 [2005]: 23-48). Most New Testament scholars, however, continue to favor the earlier dating. For references, see J. Ed Komoszewski, M. James Sawyer, and Daniel B. Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus: How Contemporary Skeptics Miss the Real Jesus and Mislead Popular Culture* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 280, n.4.

[23] E.g., Martin Hengel, "Eye-witness Memory and the Writing of the Gospels: Form Criticism, Community Tradition, and the Authority of the Authors," in *The Written Gospel*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Donald A. Hagner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 70-96.

archaeologist W. F. Albright in a number of publications between 1924 and 1956.[24] Among other things, Albright argued that the several topographical references in the Gospel could hardly have been made without some degree of familiarity with the Palestinian and particularly the Judean situation before the First Revolt (A.D. 66–70). In fact, the number of John's topographical references is rather unique within the New Testament. There are thirteen such references, and if details not mentioned in the Synoptics are included, the number increases to twenty. In a time when most interpreters believed John was fictional, these references were treated as symbolic rather than historical recollections.[25] According to Albright, however, considering the degree of the devastation created in Palestine and especially in Jerusalem by the Roman armies and also, the almost complete break in the continuity of Christian presence in those areas after the war, any correct data which could be validated archaeologically or topographically must have been carried into the Diaspora in oral form by Christians refugees.[26] Indeed, later Christian tradition does tell of the escape of some Christians from Jerusalem to Pella in Transjordan.[27]

In his 1956 article, Albright discusses only three examples of locations that were considered to have been positively identified by archaeology: the place where Pilate brought Jesus, which was called Lithostrōton in Greek and Gabbatha in Hebrew, that is, in Aramaic (19:13); "Aenon near Salim,"

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[24] W. F. Albright, "Some Observations Favoring the Palestinian Origin of the Gospel of John," *HTR* 17 (1924): 189-195; idem, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1940), 292-300; idem, *The Archaeology of Palestine* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1949), 239-248; idem, "Recent Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of John," in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology: In Honour of Charles Harold Dodd*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 153-171.

[25] E.g., Norbert Krieger, "Fiktive Orte der Johannestaufe," ZNW 45 (1954): 121-123.

[26] Albright, "Recent Discoveries in Palestine," 156. Albright used the same argument for the numerous Aramaic words in the Gospel. Words such as *rabbi* ("my master") or the Greek equivalent *didaskalos* ("teacher"), as well as most personal names in John, such as *Maryam* (Mary), *Martâ* (Martha), *La'zar* (Lazarus), *Elisheba'* (Elisabeth), and *Shalôm* (Salome), were characteristic of the period of Herod the Great to A.D. 70 and became rather current in early Christian usage probably as reminiscences of oral tradition in Palestine before the First Revolt (ibid., 157-158).

[27] Eusebius, *Church History* 3.5.3.

where John the Baptist was conducting his baptismal work, "because there was much water there" (3:23); and Jacob's well, at Sychar, "a Samaritan city" (4:3-6), which he identified with Shechem.[28] Interestingly, the first two of these identifications, as well as the exact location of Sychar, would be contradicted by later archaeological discoveries. In an updated, comprehensive survey of the archaeological status of all topographical references in John, Urban C. von Wahlde indicates that of the twenty Johannine sites, sixteen have been identified with certainty. These are Bethsaida (1:44), Cana (2:1, 11; 4:46-54; 21:2), Capernaum (2:12; 4:46; 6:17, 24; the harbor, 6:24-25; the synagogue, 6:59), Jacob's well (4:4-6), Mount Gerizim (4:20), the location of Sychar (4:5), the Sheep Gate (5:2), the pool(s) of Bethesda (5:2), Tiberias (6:1, 23; 21:2), the pool of Siloam (9:1-9), Bethany near Jerusalem (11:1-17; 12:1-11), Ephraim (11:54), the Kidron Valley (18:1), the Praetorium (18:28, 33; 19:9), Golgotha (19:17-18, 20, 41), and the tomb of Jesus (19:41-42). Of the remaining four, two can be narrowed to within a relatively restricted area: the place in the temple precincts for the keeping of animals (2:13-16) and the Lithostrōton (19:13); and the other two are still highly controversial: Aenon near Salim (3:23) and Bethany beyond the Jordan (1:28; 10:40).[29]

In his concluding observations, von Wahlde makes two important statements. The first is that archaeology has confirmed the remarkable accuracy of the topographical information in John, even in face of the great number of details provided in some instances. As a matter of fact, he says, "it is precisely those places described in the greatest detail," as in the case of the pools of Bethesda, the place of crucifixion, and the location of Jesus' tomb, "that can be identified with the greatest certitude." The second statement is that there is "no credible evidence to suggest that any of the twenty sites is simply fictitious or symbolic." Though acknowledging the possibility of some sites having a secondary symbolic meaning, von Wahlde

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[28] Albright, "Recent Discoveries in Palestine," 158-160.

[29] Urban C. von Wahlde, "Archaeology and John's Gospel," in *Jesus and Archaeology*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 523-586. For his survey of the archaeological evidence of the three places mentioned by Albright, see specifically pages 555-556 (Aenon near Salim), 556-559 (Sychar), and 572-575 (the *Lithostrōton*). For the discussion of Bethany beyond the Jordan, a site whose identification remains highly controversial, see pages 528-533.

concludes that "the intrinsic historicity and accuracy of the references should be beyond doubt."[30] Despite the premature identifications endorsed by Albright, his main contention remains valid: John's early Palestinian and Judean topographical references must derive from Diaspora Christians in the Greco-Roman world, probably by means of orally conveyed tradition. This means that instead of a second-century creation completely detached from the time and places of the events it describes, the Gospel of John does contain good, ancient reminiscences, which necessarily favors the authenticity of its content.[31] As Paul N. Anderson declares, "Albright's archaeological contribution forced biblical scholars to consider again significant aspects of Johannine historicity, having been sidestepped by the previous century or more of critical scholarship."[32]

The years of the 1940s witnessed two other important archaeological discoveries bearing on the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel. The first occurred in late 1945, when thirteen fourth-century leather bound codices written in Coptic and containing no less than forty-nine treatises were discovered in a storage jar beneath a large boulder in Nag Hammadi, a site near the Egyptian village of al-Qacr. Since the codices probably reflect second-century traditions and combine Gnostic and early Christian elements, the whole question of the impact of Gnosticism upon the New Testament, particularly John, was reopened. It has been claimed that there is now indisputable evidence of Gnostic influence on the Fourth Gospel.[33] Careful investigation, however, has led most scholars to reject this hypothesis.[34] Simply put, the Nag Hammadi documents do not furnish any evidence at all of a pre-Christian Gnostic redeemer, as described by Bultmann and several others, that might have influenced the theology and literature of the Gentiles

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[30] Ibid., 583.

[31] Albright, "Recent Discoveries in Palestine," 158.

[32] Paul N. Anderson, "Aspects of Historicity in the Gospel of John," in *Jesus and Archaeology*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 590.

[33] E.g., Gesine Robinson, "The Trimorphic Protennoia and the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel," in *Gnosticism and the Early Christian World: In Honor of James M. Robinson*, ed. James E. Goehring, et al. (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1990), 37-50.

[34] See especially Craig A. Evans, *Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John's Prologue,* JSNTSup 89 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 13-76.

churches, of which John's Gospel would be the finest example. If these documents allowed, for the first time, Bible scholars to encounter the Gnostics in their own words (and not only as they are depicted by early Christian heresiologists), they also witness to the distance that exists between Gnostic ideas and those of the New Testament. Arthur D. Nock says that the Nag Hammadi writings confirm what is already implicit in the church fathers, namely, that Gnosticism was indeed a second-century "Christian heresy with roots in speculative thought."[35]

The next and final discovery to help rescue the reputation of John's Gospel for historical reliability was the Dead Sea Scrolls. Discovered by accident in 1947 near Khirbet Qumran, close to the ruins of an ancient Jewish settlement, the Scrolls consist of a large number of biblical manuscripts, mostly fragmentary, and of other documents as well. Since they have been shown on the basis of paleography and carbon-14 tests to date from the period of Christian origins (200 B.C.–A.D. 70), these documents are of great interest not only to Old Testament research and the history of Judaism, but also to New Testament scholarship, particularly in relation to John's background. The Scrolls have made it plain that even before the Christian era there already existed in Palestine a literary setting in which Jewish, Greek, and even pre-Gnostic religious ideas were combined in a way that once was thought to be unique to John and of the second century onwards.

There are several examples in the Scrolls of the dualistic theological vocabulary found in Johannine and later Gnostic literature. These are mainly evident in the Manual of Discipline or Community Rule.[36] In cols. 3 and 4, for instance, we find words such as "world," "truth," "falsehood," "light," "darkness," "peace," "joy," and "eternal." These are typical of early Christian literature, particularly the Gospel of John. Also, expressions such as "practicing the truth," "the Spirit of Truth," "Prince of Light," "sons of light," "sons of darkness," "the light of life," "walk in the darkness," "the

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[35] Arthur D. Nock, "Gnosticism," in *Arthur Darby Nock: Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, 2 vols, ed. Zeph Stuart (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 2:956.

[36] The translation is from Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Penguin, 1997), 98-117.

wrath of God," and "the works of God" are used in ways that are clearly reminiscent of John.[37]

Parallels and points of contact between the scrolls of Qumran and John are numerous, and this has been decisive in establishing the fundamental Jewishness of the Fourth Gospel. It is no longer necessary, nor correct, to appeal to an eventual second-century Hellenistic or Gnostic milieu to explain the distinctiveness of this Gospel. Though the conceptual and theological differences between John and Qumran should not be overlooked, the similarities in vocabulary and images are of great importance in determining the nature of Johannine tradition: it is now possible to demonstrate that this tradition is much closer to that of Christianity itself than it had previously been thought possible.[38]

Recent Johannine Scholarship

The Dead Sea Scrolls prompted what became known as "the new look on the Fourth Gospel." This is precisely the title of an article published originally in 1959 by John A. T. Robinson, in which he questioned five old presuppositions related to the reliability of Johannine tradition that had mostly underlain the Fourth Gospel research in the preceding fifty years.[39] The presuppositions were so widely accepted, the consensus so strong that Robinson could even speak of what he termed "critical orthodoxy."[40] By explicitly referring to the Scrolls and other archaeological findings that vindicated John's knowledge of the topography and institutions of Palestine prior to the Jewish war, he spoke of what appeared to him to be straws in the wind, but which he was inclined to take seriously, because all of the straws

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[37] See further James H. Charlesworth, "A Critical Comparison of the Dualism in 1QS 3:13-4:26 and the 'Dualism' Contained in the Gospel of John," in *John and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, enl. ed., ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 76-106.

[38] Stephen S. Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter*, 2d ed., NTP (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 35.

[39] John A. T. Robinson, "The New Look on the Fourth Gospel," in *Studia Evangelica: Papers Presented to the International Congress on "The Four Gospels in 1957" Held at Christ Church, Oxford, 1957*, ed. Kurt Aland et al., TU 73 (Berlin: Akademie, 1959), 338-350; reprinted in John A. T. Robinson, *Twelve New Testament Studies*, SBT (Naperville: Allenson, 1962), 94-106.

[40] Robinson, *Twelve New Testament Studies*, 94.

were blowing in the same direction.[41] Then, at the end of the article he expressed his conviction that Johannine tradition is not the result of a later development, but goes back to the earliest days of Christianity.[42] So the question whether John's material is historically reliable or theologically conditioned, that is, whether the author should be regarded as a witness to the Jesus of history or to the Christ of faith only, Robinson's answer was clear: "Because he [John] is the New Testament writer who, theologically speaking, takes history more seriously than any other, he has at least the right to be heard—on the history as well as on the theology."[43]

So, the stage was set for more concrete actions concerning the issue of history in John. The first practical results, though rather imperfect, came in 1968, when J. Louis Martyn published his acclaimed little book on the redaction of the Fourth Gospel. The Nag Hammadi documents and the Dead Sea Scrolls helped to restore the essential Jewishness of this Gospel and, by means of redaction analysis, Martyn tried to locate the proper historical life-setting that could best explain John's most striking literary feature, which is the fierce hostility between Jesus and the Jews.[44] For Martyn, the reason for that is because the evangelist and his community were engaged in a serious and even violent exchange with a local synagogue, from which they separated.[45] The separation would have occurred near the end of the first century when the Jewish religious leaders excluded the Christians from

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., 106.

[43] Ibid., 102. Robinson was not the first to raise anew the issue of John's historicity. In the Sarum Lectures, delivered in 1954-1955 at the University of Oxford, C. H. Dodd had already spoken of the new situation, using arguments not much unlike those used by Robinson. A few years later, Dodd's lectures were expanded in a book titled *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

[44] The term *ioudaios* occurs 194 times in the New Testament; while it occurs in the Synoptics only 16 times, in John it appears 71, mostly in the plural form. In his definitive study, Urban C. von Wahlde concludes that out of the 71 occurrences, 38 are used in a hostile sense ("The Johannine 'Jews': A Critical Survey," *New Testament Studies* 28 [1982]: 41 [cf. 57, nn. 68, 69]). The only book that parallels John in both number of occurrences (79 times) and hostility is Acts.

[45] See J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

public worship by adding a curse against them, the Birkat ha-Minim (Benediction concerning Heretics), to the synagogue liturgy.[46]

While few have accepted Martyn's thesis in all of its details, virtually all Johannine interpreters became persuaded that despite being profoundly theological, John's theology is not floating in the air, so to speak, totally isolated from or unaffected by the *realia* of history.[47] This was indeed a huge advance in relation to previous research, and it is here that lies Martyn's main contribution to Johannine studies, though he remained rather skeptical about the historicity of the Gospel story as a whole. It is true that he suggested that the Gospel preserves two historical levels, that of Jesus and that of the evangelist, but, in line with classical redaction criticism which was still under the influence of a strong anti-supernaturalistic view of reality, he actually believed that the traditions about Jesus have been so thoroughly reshaped and rewritten in face of the prevailing circumstances at the evangelist's time that the historical figure of that early first-century Galilean can hardly be glimpsed through the Johannine lens.[48]

After Martyn, and still within the atmosphere of excitement created by redaction criticism, a relatively new issue started receiving an incredible and disproportional amount of attention within Johannine scholarship—the community which supposedly was responsible for the Gospel's origin. There was, therefore, a complete shift of focus away from the person and identity of the evangelist to his community. The attempts to reconstruct the historical and theological developments of that community, however, were so diverse and speculative that the whole enterprise soon began to crumble. Martyn himself compared the avalanche of reconstructions, including his own, to a genie which had been let out of a bottle and which was "not proving easy to

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[46] For a summary of Martyn's position, see Robert Kysar, *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel: An Examination of Contemporary Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975), 149-156, and esp. D. Moody Smith, "The Contribution of J. Louis Martyn to the Understanding of the Gospel of John," in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 275-294.

[47] See D. Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, NTT (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 48-56.

[48] For a helpful discussion on the history and character of redaction criticism, see Grant R. Osborne, "Redaction Criticism," in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, rev. ed., ed. David A. Black and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 128-149.

control."[49] After two or so decades, dissatisfaction over the value of historical-critical approaches caused Johannine scholarship to follow two opposite directions. On one hand, several new interpretive methodologies were adopted, such as sociological and literary criticisms. The latter, for example, is essentially a postmodern and reader-oriented approach that attempts to interpret the text without appealing to anything that lies outside or beyond it (e.g., its historical setting) and assuming its unity against all forms of source and redaction-critical techniques.[50] This means that the old questions of authorship and historicity lose their relevance altogether. On the other hand, and in part because of the same archaeological findings reported above, the issue of history in John was reopened and started to be tackled again in a much more straight and objective way than ever before.

Even with redaction criticism still on the rise, Robinson's "new look" was already increasingly impacting contemporary Johannine scholarship on several fronts. In 1966-1970, Raymond E. Brown published his influential two-volume commentary on the Fourth Gospel, in which he took a relatively conservative approach on questions such as authorship and historicity.[51]

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[49]See Thomas L. Brodie, *The Quest for the Origin of John's Gospel: A Source-Oriented Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 21 (for a summary of the main reconstructions up until the early 1990s, see 15-21).

[50] For an introduction to literary criticism, see esp. Jeffrey A. D. Weima, "Literary Criticism," in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, rev. ed., ed. David A. Black and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 150-169. A more detailed discussion (with helpful examples) of this and other recent approaches to the New Testament can be found in parts two and three of Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, eds., *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, rev. and exp. ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999). The most recent bibliography of Johannine research, providing ample references to sociological and literary studies, is Watson E. Mills, comp., *The Gospel of John*, vol. 4, *Bibliographies for Biblical Research: New Testament Series*, ed. Watson E. Mills, 21 vols. (Lewiston: Mellen, 1995).

[51] Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. AB 29-29A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966-1970). See also his earlier essays, "Incidents That Are Units in the Synoptic Gospels but Dispersed in St. John," CBQ 23 (1961): 143-160; "The Problem of Historicity in John," CBQ 24 (1962): 1-14. In his *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 33-34, Brown rejected his previous position that the author of the Gospel was John the apostle, but even late in his life, in his massive *The Death of the Messiah* (2 vols. [New York: Doubleday, 1994]), he remained virtually confident as in his earlier

Much of the same can be said about several other important commentaries which were published around the 1970s. Charles K. Barrett, Rudolf Schnackenburg, and Barnabas Lindars all assumed what can be described as an intermediate position between widespread skepticism and complete historicity. They rejected, for example, the idea that the Beloved Disciple was the author or even a person who could have supplied first-hand historical information, but were willing to accept that whoever was responsible for this Gospel had at his disposal at least some reliable traditions.[52]

Two twin areas of research in which long-standing positions also soon began to change had to do with the genre of the Fourth Gospel and its relation with the Synoptics. Different as it is, John is not a theological treatise per se, but a Gospel, that is, a narrative of Jesus' ministry, and as such it stands together with Mark, Matthew, and Luke. This is what it claims for itself (20:30-31), and this is what it is. Like the Synoptics, it starts with the appearance of John the Baptist and ends with the passion narrative, and everything is within a chronological framework which seems much more complete and accurate than theirs. Already in 1969, Käsemann was impressed by the fact that "John felt himself under constraint to compose a Gospel rather than letters or a collection of sayings" and found this to be detrimental to some of Bultmann's arguments. "For it seems to me," he said, "that if one has no interest in the historical Jesus, then one does not write a Gospel, but, on the contrary, finds the Gospel form inadequate."[53] Moreover,

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commentary in finding historical elements in most of John's passages.

[52] Charles K. Barrett, 100-144; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 3 vols., trans. Kevin Smyth, et al. (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968-1982), 1:75-104; Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, NCB (London: Oliphants, 1972), 28-34. Recent studies representing similar intermediate position include George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, WBC 36 (Waco: Word, 1987; 2d. ed. [Nashville: Nelson], 1999), lxxiii-lxxv; D. Moody Smith, "Historical Issues and the Problem of John and the Synoptics," in *From Jesus to John*, ed. Martinus C. de Boer, JSNTSup 84 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 252-267; idem, *John*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 24-27; R. Alan Culpepper, "The AMHN, AMHN Sayings in the Gospel of John," in *Perspectives on John: Methods and Interpretation in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Robert B. Sloan and Mikeal C. Parson (Lewinton: Mellen, 1993), 57-101; idem, *John, The Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend*, SPNT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 56-88.

[53] Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions for Today*, trans. W. J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 41.

John's author claims to be a direct eyewitness of at least some of the events he records (21:24; 19:34-35; cf. 1:14), which strongly emphasizes the importance for him of Jesus as a historical figure. In 1 John, he is even more explicit on this (cf. 1:1-3; 2:18-25; 4:1-3; 5:6-9), and the Epistle would make little or no sense at all without the Gospel.

This led to a complete reevaluation of the traditional consensus that John was dependent on the Synoptics, or, in the case of Bultmann, that John was dependent on a signs source and a passion source.[54] As early as 1938, P. Gardner-Smith had already argued that John was written independently from the Synoptics,[55] a thesis that was taken even further by C. H. Dodd, a couple of decades later, and which was congenial with the historical value of John. After an exhaustive analysis of the Gospel, Dodd concluded it was highly probable that the fourth evangelist employed an ancient (oral) tradition independent of the other Gospels and deserving serious consideration as a contribution to the knowledge of the historical facts concerning Jesus Christ.[56] Independence, however, is not in itself equivalent to historicity, as dependence does not necessarily make a composition fictional. So, even if it can be demonstrated that John did know and used one (usually Mark) or more of the other Gospels,[57] in view of the cumulative evidence this can no longer detract from John as containing genuine tradition.

The fact is that, in recent years and as an integral part of the Third Quest for the historical Jesus, Johannine scholarship has reached a point in which the historiographical character of the Beloved Disciple's testimony is argued for as openly, and powerfully, as never before. This has been done, for example, by scholars such as Martin Hengel, James H. Charlesworth, and especially Richard Bauckham.[58] Though they don't come to the point of

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[54] See Ashton, 45-50. For additional information on source criticism on John, see Gerard S. Sloyan, *What Are They Saying about John?* (New York: Paulist, 1991), 28-49.

[55] P. Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938).

[56] Dodd, 423.

[57] For a comprehensive survey of positions on the issue of John's relationship with the Synoptics since Gardner-Smith and Dodd, see Smith, *John among the Gospels*, 45-194.

[58] E.g., Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (London: SCM, 1989), subsequently expanded as *Die Johanneische Frage: Ein Lösungsversuch*, WUNT 67 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993); James H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John?* (Valley Forge: Trinity, 1995); Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses:*

identifying the Beloved Disciple as the apostle John,[59] their works signal an important trend in the Fourth Gospel's contemporary research,[60] namely, the rehabilitation of John as a source for the historical-Jesus quest.

This trend culminated with the establishment, in 2002, of the John, Jesus, and History Project at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meetings. The project, which is now in its third triennium and has raised a considerable amount of attention within Johannine and Jesus scholarship, is intended to examine foundational questions about both the nature of the Fourth Gospel and its historicity. A number of the most significant papers delivered at the sessions by leading Johannine scholars have already been collected in two volumes which from now on will certainly be reference points for those interested in the subject. [61] The voices are still not speaking in unisonous–they probably never will–but it is possible to detect significant elements of convergence among the various discussions, such as more attention to John's particular type of historiographical memory and the way he understands history, a considerable departure from source-critical analysis, a continuous interest on the issue of John's relationship with the Synoptics, a fresh approach to the history-theology debate, a call for

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The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); idem, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

[59] While Charlesworth argues that the Beloved Disciple was the apostle Thomas (*The Beloved Disciple*, 225-287), both Hengel and Bauckham think that he was the elusive John the Elder of the well-known Papias' citation preserved by Eusebius (*Church History* 3.39.4). According to them, still as a very young lad and through the ministry of John the Baptist, this John was attracted by the activity of Jesus and became one of his most faithful disciples, though he was not one of the Twelve (Hengel, *The Johannine Question*, 109-135; Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple*, 73-91).

[60] For additional, specialized studies on specific passages and issues dealing with John's historicity, see Craig L. Blomberg, "John and Jesus," in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 220-224, and the several essays in Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser, eds., *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

[61] Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, and Tom Thatcher, eds., *John, Jesus, and History*, vol. 1, *Critical Appraisals of Critical Views*, SBLSymS 44 (Atlanta: SBL, 2007); idem, *John, Jesus, and History*, vol. 2, *Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel*, SBLECL 2 (Atlanta, SBL, 2009).

interdisciplinary investigations, as well as for a more nuanced approach to Jesus studies. Even though the essays still do not provide too many clear answers, there is a definite effort to put John's Gospel in its rightful place concerning the quest for the historical Jesus.[62] And this is indeed one of the most significant moves in modern Johannine research, whatever the long-run results may be.[63]

In point of fact, it seems very forced logic to conclude that because John differs from the Synoptics and is mostly theological in its tone it cannot be historical in its character. From the hermeneutical standpoint, the either/or approach is absolutely unjustifiable, and if the results of archaeology are not confined to the meanders of specialized books or the penumbra of museum rooms, one can even venture to say that such an approach is actually mistaken. It is puzzling, ponders Anderson, that though having more archaeological and topographical material than all three Synoptics combined, there are still those who consider John to be entirely non-historical. In this case, how to account for that material? Where did it come from and why was it included? Was it only for rhetorical effect or to lend a sense of realism to the narrative?[64] One thing that needs to be said out loud is that the attitude which takes that material as a positive sign of the character and origin of the Johannine tradition should not be so quickly dismissed as a misuse of critical sensibility.[65]

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[62] "John has come back," says D. Moody Smith in his article ("John: A Source for Jesus Research?" *John, History, and Jesus,* 1:177).

[63] A more complete report on the current trends in Johannine scholarship can be found in Klaus Scholtissek, "The Johannine Gospel in Recent Research," in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research,* ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 444-472. See also the several essays in Tom Thatcher, ed., *What We Have Heard From the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies* (Waco: Baylor, 2007).

[64] Anderson, "Aspects of Historicity in the Gospel of John," 596.

[65] It should be remembered that there are also several other lines of evidence for the historicity of John. In addition to topographical references, Anderson lists rhetorical claims to firsthand knowledge, aspects of spatiality and topographical incidentals, aspects of personal familiarity, chronological references and the fact of empirical detail (597-613). Concluding his article, he argues that "while much of John is theological, to claim that all of its content—or even most of it—must be ascribed to canons of a historicity and concoction is more than the authentically critical scholar will want to claim" ("Aspects of Historicity in the Gospel of John," 618).

Conclusion

Johannine research is deeply indebted to archaeology. The theological and philosophical approach of post-Enlightenment scholars, who only seldom applied historical analysis to the Fourth Gospel, was severely crippled by a number of artifactual and topographical findings. Such findings called for a complete reassessment of the problem of history in this Gospel and gave rise to more objective discussions of several related issues. Though the archaeologist's shovel will never be able to demonstrate the veracity of statements such as "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (1:14), "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (3:16), and "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (20:31), or episodes such as the miracle at Cana (2:1-11), the feeding of the five thousand (6:1-15), and the resurrection of Lazarus (11:17-44), it has helped more than anything else to put John's Jewishness, antiquity, and even historical likeliness on a firm foundation.

That this Gospel was not written later than the turn of the first century can hardly be disputed. With regard to its conceptual background, scholars who still operate within the constraints of the religio-historical school, thus arguing for Hellenism rather than Judaism as the main source of John's ideas, are admittedly few.[66] In relation to authorship, it is true that many interpreters still refrain themselves from identifying the Beloved Disciple as John the Son of Zebedee, but it is at least frankly acknowledged today that "there is always the chance that the apostle John may have been in some way 'author' of the Gospel we traditionally call 'of John,'" as Francis J. Moloney says. He adds: "It is arrogant to rule any possibility out of court."[67] As for

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[66]A classical example is Helmut Koester, who continues to explain John's miracle stories and typical discourses as gnosticizing interpretation of cult and tradition within the Johannine community (*From Jesus to the Gospels: Interpreting the New Testament in Its Context* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007], 105-121).

[67] Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, SP 4 (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1998), 8. The traditional view that the Beloved Disciple was John the apostle is still maintained by a considerable number of recent scholars. E.g., John A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John*, ed. J. F. Coakley (London: SCM, 1985), 93-122; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 68-81; Gary M. Burge, *Interpreting the Gospel of John*, GNTE (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 37-52; Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 672-683; E. Earle Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 143-146; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody:

the historical reliability, though practically all scholars now agree that behind John's material lie some good traditions, most of them continue to hold that a larger amount of that material still proves more suspicious than not.[68] However, as Craig L. Blomberg remarks, this is more the result of a presupposition that simply rejects any form of supernaturalism than the conclusion of a sustained argument.[69] And this is where the discussion ends, for in the final account one's reaction to this Gospel will always be bound to an individual decision, not so much to the weight of evidence (cf. 12:37; 20:29).

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Hendrickson, 2003), 1:82-104; Colin G. Kruse, *John*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 24-30; Andreas J. Köstenberger, John, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 6-8; Paul N. Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus: Modern Foundations Reconsidered* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 8-15.

[68] In his recently published commentary, Andrew T. Lincoln states rather emphatically: "The Fourth Gospel, like many other ancient biographies, is a narrative which contains a substratum of core events from the tradition with substantial claims to reliability, but one which is now shaped by an interpretive superstructure which contains a considerable amount of embellishment, including some legendary or fictive elements" (*The Gospel According to Saint John*, BNTC [Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005], 46-47). For even more radical skepticism in relation to John's historicity, see Maurice Casey, *Is John's Gospel True?* (London: Routledge, 1996), and the twin volumes by the Jesus Seminar: Robert Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993); Robert Funk and the Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998).

[69] Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 283.

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Principles of Worship and Liturgy

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Many students and church members are bewildered by the multiplicity of Christian styles of worship. Usually, when I hear believers talking about these feelings the conversation ends when someone affirms that the reason why some dislike a form of worship is cultural. Culture shapes by taste. Thus, the reasoning follows, if I accept the new style with time I will come to like it. I am not sure I will like cilantro if I force myself to eat it once a day for the rest of my life. Are worship styles[1] a matter of taste or a matter of principle? Is personal taste a reliable principle to shape our corporate worship style? Are there principles we can use to help us shape our worship and choose what we include in it?

As many believers I have worshiped God since my early youth. When we worship, experience precedes thinking. We relate to the Sabbath in the same way. We experience it according to God's command. We just do it. We do not think about it. Why should we reflect on what we experience? Because Jesus personally prayed to the father that we should "become perfectly one" (John 17:23) as He and the Father are one (22). Thus, when our worship service becomes divisive, we need to reflect about some of the explicit and implicit reasons we have for what we do. I always avoid discussion when arguments and conclusions flow from passions, emotions, and personal preferences. Still, we all need to think and pray about this situation that dishonors God. I hope this article may help us evaluate our

[1] Here I use the generalized misnomer "worship styles." The correct designation for congregational activity styles is "liturgy." We will explain the distinction between worship and liturgy in section 2 below.

worship and liturgical habits, so we may serve and worship God in Spirit and Truth.

Many Adventists understand worship is what they do on Sabbath during the sermon hour. Moreover, the conviction that the way we worship is cultural is spreading among us. To say that worship styles are "cultural" means that we can use any cultural form accepted by contemporary society. "Worship is about self-expression. Therefore, anything I choose to do to express myself in worship is acceptable before the Lord." When we address divine worship in this context, we are bound to generate animated disagreement and very little communication. We are understanding worship on a cultural/individualistic basis. Yet, at least in theory, everybody will deny that "everything is acceptable before the Lord." However, when no clear and permanent parameters are used to evaluate cultural forms, it is impossible to avoid this conclusion in practical life. Obviously, we will not find in human culture permanent parameters to evaluate cultural forms.
We should not address the role of culture in ritual formation before we have a clear idea about the permanent principles that should guide the rituals we use in corporate worship. My purpose in this article is to identify some of the permanent guiding principles of biblical worship that should unite Adventist worship around the world and help to evaluate the cultural process of ritual formation and worshiping practice. The questions before us are, where do we find them? What are these permanent principles?

1. Methodology

As Adventists, we should agree that the permanent principles of worship must be biblical (Fundamental Belief 1). After all, we claim Scripture to be the sole rule of doctrine and practice. Yet, since Scripture does not provide us with an explicit list of worship principles, we need to delve into Scripture to identify them. This is the task of Systematic Theology. Adventist Systematic Theology has not developed this issue yet. Consequently, for the purposes of this article I have chosen to research the writings of Ellen White to see whether she discovered in Scripture some

permanent biblical principles of worship[2] that may help us while exegetes and theologians research this issue.

In this article, I use a systematic methodology. Systematic means articulating, interlinking or interfacing. Ellen White was familiar with the systematic approach to Bible study. She knew that "the most valuable teaching of the Bible is not to be gained by occasional or disconnected study. Its great system of truth is not so presented as to be discerned by the hasty or careless reader. Many of its treasures lie far beneath the surface, and can be obtained only by diligent research and continuous effort. The truths that go to make up the great whole must be searched out and gathered up, "here a little, and there a little." Isaiah 28:10. When thus searched out and brought together, they will be found to be perfectly fitted to one another."[3] In this system we find interlinking principles. "Every principle in the word of God has its place, every fact its bearing. And the complete structure, in design and execution, bears testimony to its Author. Such a structure no mind but that of the Infinite could conceive or fashion."[4]
Following the systematic method we will discuss some of the principles of worship in their logical interconnections and contexts. Although principles of worship are of the greatest importance for our understanding and adoration of God, they do not stand by themselves. Instead, they depend on broader principles we need to consider to understand worship. Then, with the help of Ellen White, we will explain some of the principles of worship presented in order of influence. We will start with the most general and influential principles of worship, and move on to principles of congregational worship, and liturgy formation.

2. Scripture, Culture, Worship and Liturgy

Before dealing with the principles of Christian worship, we need to gain a working knowledge of the way believers arrive at their conceptions of

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[2] To search Ellen White's writings I used the CD-Rom with her published works. I searched for the word: "worship" and received 3552 entries. Of course, this number includes many repetitions of the same paragraph in different publications. The actual number, therefore, must be substantially less. In the first 112 entries, I found a number of principles of worship she draws from Scripture that helped me to discover and understand some permanent principles of worship. In this chapter, I will not report about Ellen White's view on worship.

[3] Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 123.

[4] Ibidem, 124.

worship. This knowledge is necessary because Adventists frequently copy their "worship styles" from Protestant denominations as if they could do no harm.[5] Thus, we need to understand, critically, the origin of the various 'worship styles' currently available, and, decide whether we should continue to adopt each new "style" of liturgy evangelicals create, or, should ground our liturgy on scriptural thinking instead. We also need to understand the role that culture plays in the liturgical styles we are copying from other Christian denominations.

Let us start by spelling out the distinction between "worship" and "liturgy" we have already assumed above. The Oxford dictionary defines "worship" as "the feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for a deity,"[6] and, "liturgy" as "a form or formulary according to which public religious worship, especially Christian worship, is conducted."[7] In other words, while "worship" names an internal state of human consciousness, "liturgy" designates objective forms and rituals, external to human consciousness. In short, worship is an internal experience that takes place in the inner being of human beings. Liturgy consists in the external forms and rituals believers use in their worship ceremonies.

From this distinction, it follows that much of the discussion about "worship" in Adventism is a quarreling about liturgy and rituals. Confusing worship with liturgy hides the deep spiritual issue of worshiping God. We should not equate worship with liturgy and rituals. We need to understand, then, what worship is, and how it connects to the formalities of liturgy. Perhaps some of the principles of worship Ellen White discusses might assist us to understand the relation between worship and liturgy better.

When we partake in church rituals, we usually think more about how they make us feel than about how they originated. However, subjective personal enjoyment and pastoral success in attracting believers to worship services are not reliable criteria to judge the appropriateness of rituals in public worship. Adventists may be inclined to assume they draw their rituals from Scripture. Clearly, baptism and Holy Communion originate in Scripture. Yet, other things they do in public worship, like the hymns they

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[5] The same uncritical use of cultural forms occurs in Adventist missiology. See for instance Carlos Martin,"C-5 Muslims, C-5 Missionaries or C-5 Strategies?" *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17/2, Autumn (2006): 122-34.

[6] *Oxford Dictionary of English* (CD-ROM by Selectsoft Publishing), s.v., worship.

[7] Ibidem, s.v., liturgy.

sing, cannot be traced back to a biblical text. Thus culture plays a role in liturgical formation. How can we know, then, if the liturgical forms we create or copy from evangelical denominations are compatible with biblical worship? To answer this question we need to consider briefly, what any liturgical style assumes.

To simplify the explanation of a complex matter, I have drawn a diagram in figure 1 below. I hope it will help readers to understand from where liturgical forms come.

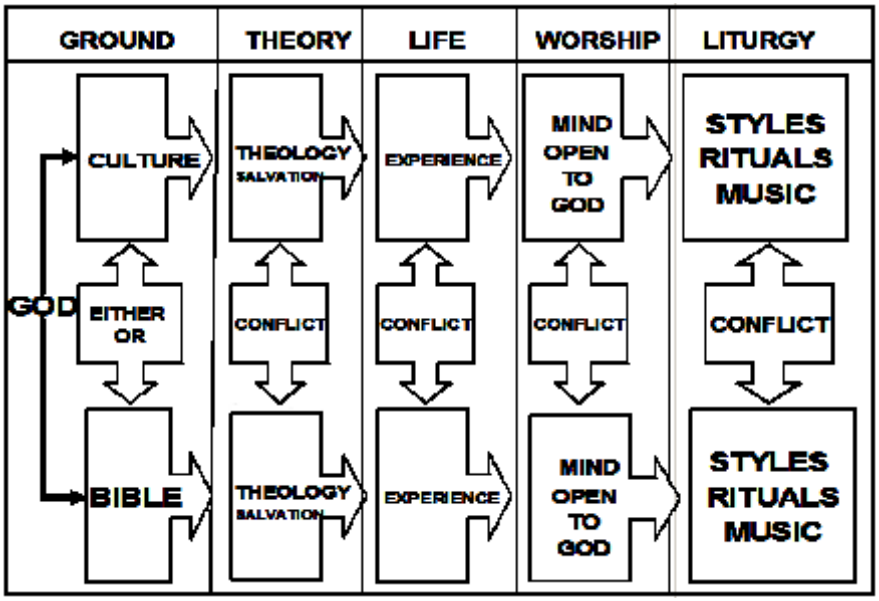

Figure 1 Conditions of Worship and Liturgy

If we describe the diagram from the viewpoint of our life experience (historical order), we have to start from right and move to the left. The diagram's headers present interlinked levels of reality. They are, (5) liturgy, (4) worship, (3) life, (2) theory, and, (1) the ground. The liturgical level (5) includes, for instance, styles, rituals, and music. The (4) worship level refers to the inner attitude of the mind open to God. The "life" level (3) antecedes the worship level in the sense that experiences of the Christian life are conditions to the worship experience and help to shape liturgical forms. Yet,

the "theory" level (2), where the understanding of theology and salvation takes place, logically precedes and helps to shape the levels of life, worship and liturgy. Finally, the "ground" level (1) is the foundation on which the other four levels stand. If we consider the same components in their logical order (causal order) we have to start from the left moving to the right. Thus, the (1) ground causes our (2) theological understanding, that in turn, influences (3) our life experience in Christ, which goes on to (4) elicit our worship, and (5) shape our liturgical styles.

Ellen White makes the connections drawn in this diagram when explaining Satan's ways of deception. "Satan is constantly seeking to divert the attention of the people from the Bible"[8] [ground level 1]. "It is Satan's constant effort to misrepresent the character of God, the nature of sin, and the real issues at stake in the great controversy. His sophistry lessens the obligation of the divine law and gives men license to sin. At the same time he causes them to cherish false conceptions of God [*level 2 of theory*] so that they regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love [*level 3 of life*]. The cruelty inherent in his own character is attributed to the Creator; it is embodied in systems of religion and expressed in modes of worship [*level 4 of worship*]. Thus the minds of men are blinded, and Satan secures them as his agents to war against God. By perverted conceptions of the divine attributes, heathen nations were led to believe human sacrifices necessary to secure the favor of Deity; and horrible cruelties have been perpetrated under the various forms of idolatry [*level 5 of liturgy*]."[9]

Historically we know liturgy by action. As we experience rituals, they become part of who we are. We belong to the liturgy, and, the liturgy belongs to us. With repetition liturgy becomes second nature. This explains why many find very difficult to analyze rationally or explain with words their views about liturgy. We can see why matters of liturgy can become very emotional and sensitive. We cannot ignore the historical level in which we experience liturgy. Because external forms of liturgy appeal to our sensory perception, we always run the risk to confuse them with worship.

When disagreement about liturgical styles arises in the church, we should not forget its emotional nature and try to reflect on it from its causes.

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[8] Ellen White, *Christian Education.* 1893. Battle Creek, MI: International Tract Society, 1894, 39.

[9] Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1911), 569.

In other words, we should distance ourselves from our emotional experience and attempt the difficult task to understand the causes of liturgical styles. We should start by considering the ground of theological beliefs and religious experiences. Let us go back to our diagram above. God's revelation is the ground. Revelation, however, requires human appropriation. Christians have appropriated divine revelation in two main ways. Classical and Modern Christianity think human culture reveals or points to God. Seventh-day Adventism thinks God reveals Himself in Scripture as He personally interacts historically within human culture. These opposite convictions become the ground from which theological understanding, life experiences, worship, and liturgical styles flow. They create two different and conflicting views of theology, salvation, Christian experience, worship, and liturgical styles. In other words, liturgical styles in Roman Catholic and Protestant denominations are closely dependent on the way they understand the revelation-inspiration of Scripture, theology, salvation, the Christian life, and worship. For this reason it is not safe to borrow liturgical styles from evangelical denominations uncritically. If we do, we will accept culturally based rituals and make the church vulnerable to the theological system to which they belong.

When believers assume changing culture as ground of divine revelation—philosophy, science and tradition—they place salvation outside human history. This theological assumption disconnects God and salvation from history and culture. God operates salvation in the timeless non-historical level of the human soul. God does not save in the historical/cultural level but on the higher level of non-historical spirituality. Protestants call it justification by faith or "the gospel;" Roman Catholics call it sacraments.

Liturgy, then, belongs to the realm of history and culture where God does not intervene. This being the case, believers feel free to use cultural forms to worship their conceptions of God. This uncritical use of culture fits well with the use of culture as the ground of theology and life experiences. Yet, as culture changes, Catholic and Protestant denominations are compelled to adapt their theologies and liturgical styles to changing social conventions. Thus, cultural originated rituals and pluralism in liturgical styles fit with the timeless/spiritual nature of divine activity and the gospel experience of salvation. Seventh-day Adventist believers, however, should not adapt liturgical forms to culture as Roman Catholic and Evangelicals do

because the ground on which their build their theology and life is not culture but Scripture.

When believers assume Scripture as ground revealing God—*sola, tota, prima scriptura* principle—they find the *transcendent* and *immutable* God personally operating salvation within the historical flow of human history. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, the same God continues to be the center of all histories. As our theologies originate directly from His words revealed to us through the prophets cultural changes do not require changes in theology, life experiences, worship, or liturgical styles. Only new revelatory words from God could bring changes in the Christian life, worship, and liturgical styles. Believers committed to biblical teachings, then, should make any cultural or artistic form they choose to become part of Christian liturgy fit the overall teachings of the Bible, especially its teachings about salvation, and the new life in Christ. Specific principles about liturgy should also fit the overall theological and experiential contexts based on the *sola scriptura* principle.

There are, then, two different and conflicting ways to incorporate cultural elements in Christian liturgies and rituals. One way, grounded in culture, adopted mainly by Catholic and main line Evangelical denominations, use only non-permanent cultural guidelines—philosophy and science—to determine the inclusion of current cultural customs in their liturgies. Another way, grounded on Biblical revelation, adopted by Seventh-day Adventism and some biblically based Evangelical congregations, use only permanent biblical guidelines to determine the inclusion of current cultural customs in their liturgies. Let us turn our attention to some general principles of worship we find in Scripture.

3. General Principles of Worship

What is a principle? The Oxford dictionary tells us that a principle is "a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning." Simply put, a principle is a guide that helps us understand nature and life. In this section, we turn our attention to biblical principles that may help us personally and as a community to experience true Christian worship and express it using compatible cultural forms in our liturgy.

We will consider some general principles first. They will help us to understand the nature of worship. Later we will survey briefly a few principles of congregational worship. Both set of principles are reliable

criteria Adventists may use to evaluate, modify and identify cultural forms compatible with Scripture and acceptable to God.

Principle of Origin: God the Creator

The cause of worship is God—His nature, actions and initiatives. That worship is about God, not about us, or our cultural preferences is the grounding principle of Christian worship. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, biblical authors clearly teach this principle. Twenty five centuries ago God told Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt to *worship Him* (Exodus 3:12). At the end of Scripture, we find the angel God used to give the visions of Revelation telling John to "*worship God*" (Revelation 22:8-9). According to Jesus, this principle is universal, all the angels (Hebrews, 1:6) and even Satan (Matthew 4:16) must worship God. Ellen White underlines the eternal permanence of this principle. "The true ground of divine worship, not of that on the seventh day merely, but of all worship, is found in *the distinction between the Creator and his creatures.* This great fact can never become obsolete, and must never be forgotten. "[10] This distinction is huge. It tells us God's reality goes beyond the greatness of his exalted throne in heaven. Theologians call it "divine transcendence." This means that God is great, beyond our understanding (Job 36:26). Not even the highest heaven can contain him (2 Chronicles 6:18). This can help us to understand why the second commandment tells us not to make any image of God (Exodus 20:4). God's the creator is beyond images. To make an image of God is to limit him to one of his creatures. The greatness and transcendence of God the creator elicits worship and requires befitting liturgical forms.

From Moses' and John's statements above, we learn that worship is a human action directed to God. Interestingly, neither the Hebrew nor the Greek languages have a specific word for worship as we do in English. Addressing Moses, God used the Hebrew word *'abad*, which means, "to serve, to work, to be a slave, to worship." Addressing John, the angel used the Greek word *proskunéw,* which means, "to bow down." According to these words, worship includes human *submission* and *service* to God.

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[10] *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, 1888. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1907), 437-438, emphasis added.

Submission points to the inner spiritual nature of worship. *Service* describes its external expression as life style.

If worship is a relation of submission and service to God, the way we understand God (theology) determines our worship and liturgy. This link between theology and worship fits the presuppositions of worship we described in figure 1 above. The less we know the God of Scripture the more likely culture will shape our worship and liturgy. Ellen White's statement quoted above masterfully underlines God the Creator as the biblical origin and referent of worship and liturgy.

We worship the creator. In doing that, Seventh-day Adventist worship departs from most organized religions that accept deep time evolutionary ideas. According to the message of the first angel's in Revelation 14, God's visible end time Church will worship the Creator and proclaim it to the world (Revelation 14 7). As our understanding of God differs, so does our Christian life, worship, and choice of liturgical forms.

Christian believers worship God in Christ. Christ is the creator (John 1:1-3) incarnated in human nature (John 1:14). Yet, many believers forget the otherness and greatness of Christ as Creator and assume that in worship they relate to a human friend. This view promotes a wrong sense of familiarity that leads to informality, casualness, and entertainment.

We need to broaden and deepen our idea about who God is beyond His incarnation in Jesus Christ. The Bible will help us to do that. As our ideas of God expand through Bible study our worship experience, and liturgical forms will conform to the transcendence and otherness of God. As we approach the presence of the infinite and mysterious Creator, a sense of awe and reverence will fill our hearts and houses of worship.

Principle of Existence: Discipleship as Necessary Condition

While God is the cause of worship, human response is the necessary condition of its existence. Without human response there is no worship. Human response, then, belongs to the relational essence of worship. The nature of human response in worship is already implicit in the words submission and service Old and New Testaments use to name it. Thus, only true disciples worship God. Thousands of professed Christians can participate in religious ceremonies, but only Christ's disciples can offer Him true acceptable worship.

How do sinners become disciples? Baptism (a worship ritual) does not change sinners into disciples. Ellen White explains, "the condition and

evidence of our discipleship is self denial and the cross. Unless these are brought into our experience, we cannot know God; *we cannot worship him* in spirit and in truth and in the beauty of holiness."[11] Jesus taught that if we continue in His way we are truly his disciples (John 8:31). We become disciples, then, when by studying Scripture understand Jesus' life style and freely accept to follow Him leaving behind the life style of the old self (Ephesians 4:22) and the world (Galatians 6:14). Self-denial central to Christ's incarnation and life makes possible discipleship (service to Christ). According to Paul, this is the only rational (coherent) way to worship God (Romans 12:1). Without discipleship, private and corporate worship rituals are external forms voided of power, meaning, and coherence. This brings us to the nature of worship.

Principle of Nature: Spirit and Truth

When Jesus told a Samaritan woman that "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24, NRSV), He defined the nature of worship. Commenting on this passage, Ellen White pointed out that Christ was "…showing that the ritual service was passing away, and possessed no virtue…True circumcision is the worship of Christ in spirit and truth, not in forms and ceremonies, with hypocritical pretense."[12] Consequently, believers need to realize that worship does not consist in performing external rituals (liturgy), but in experiencing inner spiritual surrendering to God's truth.

If worship is a matter of the heart (mind, will, and emotions), sinful human beings need a constant renewal of their thought patterns and contents. Knowing that inner thoughts corrupt men and women (Genesis 6:5; Matthew 15:18), Paul realized that worshipers must not only avoid adopting the thinking of the world, but they must seek to adopt Christ's thought patterns (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 10:5). As Christ transforms the thoughts of men and women in his likeness, they become ready to worship him in spirit and truth.

If our thoughts must not conform to the world, how can we pretend God will accept liturgical forms adapted to the way of thinking and acting of the world? Our liturgical forms must be compatible with the spiritual nature of worship, and fit Christ's thoughts and truth. Yet, we must not forget that

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[11] Ibidem, 51, emphasis mine.

[12] *Special Testimonies on Education*. c.1897, unpublished work*, 173.*

liturgy is only the external vehicle of worship. Even if we dare to enact rituals ordained by God in Scripture formally, without spirit and truth, we are not worshiping but offending God (Isaiah 1:11-14).

Principle of Enjoyment: Meeting a Friend

Worship must be a pleasant occasion[13] not because the liturgical style is attractive to our taste, but because we meet Christ. We meet Christ in His word. In other words, if worship becomes pleasant to you only when music, drama, decorations, and ceremonies appeal to your personal or cultural "taste," you may not be worshiping but seeking entertainment and performing an external work. You may need to become a disciple of Christ to fulfill the necessary condition of worship.

Ellen White clearly understood the enjoyment principle of worship. "When they worship Him, He expects to be with them, to bless and comfort them, filling their hearts with joy and love. The Lord desires His children to take comfort in His service and to find more pleasure than hardship in His work. He desires that those who come to worship Him shall carry away with them precious thoughts of His care and love, that they may be cheered in all the employments of daily life, that they may have grace to deal honestly and faithfully in all things."[14] Doubtless, the enjoyment of worship embraces much more than rituals and ceremonies.

Although music, ceremonies, rituals, and social interaction have a rightful place in church services, they do not belong to the nature of Christian worship. Many have a hard time understanding that the joy of worship generates from following Christ daily, not from the liturgy. Worship takes place personally as a life experience of discipleship. In congregational worship, believers express the joy daily communion with God and service to him generates in their lives. The disciple brings joy to the worship service to share with God and fellow believers. Joy of worship is not generated by the attractiveness of liturgy.

The notion that joy originates in liturgy corrupts the worshiping experience. Liturgy operates on the senses not on the spirit where worship

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[13] "Our God is a tender, merciful Father. His service should not be looked upon as a heart-saddening, distressing exercise. It should be a pleasure to worship the Lord and to take part in His work. God would not have His children, for whom so great salvation has been provided, act as if He were a hard, exacting taskmaster" Ellen White, *Lift Him Up*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988, 254.

[14] Ibidem.

takes place. In the twentieth century liturgy seeks to keep its ephemeral appeal to the senses by accommodating to the entertainment industry. By adapting liturgical forms to the world Christians disregard the Bible as ground of worship (see figure 1), its principles of worship, and the essence of Christianity.

This procedure is not new. Ellen White vividly describes the results of this approach to liturgy in Ahab's time. "Captivated by the gorgeous display and the fascinating rites of idol worship, the people followed the example of the king and his court, and gave themselves up to the intoxicating, degrading pleasures of a sensual worship. In their blind folly they chose to reject God and His worship. The light so graciously given them had become darkness. The fine gold had become dim."[15]

4. Principles of Congregational Worship

For many Adventists "worship" boils down to the Saturday morning sermon. What should we do when we meet together to worship God? To answer this question we will consider briefly some principles of congregational worship. Congregational principles assume, expand, and affirm the general principles discussed above.

Principle of Existence: Divine Presence

Is it possible to go to church without worshiping God? Can we equal attendance to church with worship? What does it take for a congregation to worship God? According to the general principles of origin and existence, worship originates in God's creation and exists in human discipleship. Thus, God as creator and discipleship are preconditions of congregational worship. Disciples come to worship the Creator. Yet, what should take place for congregational worship to exist?

Congregational worship responds to God's presence. Without divine presence, worship does not exist. We only meet, sing and relate to each other. How do we experience the presence of God in congregational worship? Ellen White explains, "although God dwells not in temples made with hands, yet He honors with *His presence* the assemblies of His people. He has promised that when they come together to seek Him, to acknowledge their sins, and to pray for one another, *He will meet with them*

[15] *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 1890. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958, 116.

by His Spirit."[16] According to Christ, however, we do not see or feel the Holy Spirit (John 3: 7-8). How, then, can we experience the presence of Christ?

The way in which Christians understand God's presence through the Holy Spirit varies widely. Roman Catholics and main line Protestantism believe Christ is present in the sacraments, specially, the Eucharist. Charismatic Christians think they experience the presence of Christ in the baptism of the Holy Spirit generally manifested in conjunction with loud music, the gift of tongues, and preaching. Biblical Christians believe Christ becomes present when his word is proclaimed. Ellen White explains, "God's Spirit is in his word, and a special blessing will be received by those who accept the words of God when illuminated to their mind by the Holy Spirit. It is thus that the believer eats of Christ, the Bread of Life. Truth is seen in a new light, and the *soul rejoices as in the visible presence of Christ*."[17]

"When we bow in prayer, let us remember that Jesus is with us. When we go into the house of God, let us remember that we are not going into the place of worship alone. We bring Jesus with us. If the people of God could have a realizing sense of this fact, they would not be inattentive hearers of the word. There would not be a cold lethargy upon hearts, so that those who profess his name cannot speak of his love."[18]

Congregational worship exists because of the proclamation, explanation, and application of God's words to the concrete life of believers. For this reason, the sermon, personal testimonies, and, biblical lyrics (spiritual songs?) become the essential sensory/spiritual component of worship. Yet, proclamation of the word in itself is not worship. Worship is the invisible and free movement of the mind/life of individual believers who respond to God's word in deep and complete commitment to Him.

When public worship takes place, God the creator makes himself present in Christ trough the Word and the Holy Spirit, and in response, disciples offer a renewed commitment of faith, spiritual songs, praise, thanksgiving, and devotion. Ellen White brings it home. "When our hearts are tuned to praise our Maker, not only in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, but also in our lives, we shall live in communion with Heaven. Our

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[16] *Prophets and Kings,* 1917. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1943, 50.

[17] *Signs of the Times*, October 10, 1895 par. 9, emphasis added.

[18] Ibidem, April 18, 1892 par. 10.

offering of grateful thanks will not be spasmodic, or reserved for special occasions; there will be gratitude in the heart and in the home, in private as well as in public devotion. This constitutes the true worship of God."[19]

Principle of Attraction: The Resurrected Christ

Why do you go to church on Saturdays? Is it the music? Do you go to meet friends? Do you like the way the pastor preaches? Do you attend church because of the air conditioned and architectural style of the building, or the fact that the church is conveniently located and holds meetings in a time slot that fits your schedule? If you go to church for these or similar reasons, you may not be worshiping God.

God designed that in worship Christ should be the real, living, active center of attraction. Christ promised that "when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." (John 12:32, NIV). "*Christ purposed that his cross should become the center of attraction, whereby he should draw the hearts of men to himself.*"[20] Ellen White explains that "the Father came in vital connection with the world through his well-beloved Son, and the revelation of divine truth through the Son was designed to draw men to the Father."[21] The resurrected Christ through the Holy Spirit draws all men to Himself. Not all will worship Him, not all will be saved, but all will be attracted by Christ to Himself. When men and women respond to Christ's attraction they worship Him in Spirit and Truth. Do you go to church to meet Christ? Does the joy of meeting his presence in his word move you to your knees, service and praise?

5. Principles of Liturgy

Principle of Creativity: Obedience to Christ

The principle of attraction leads to the principle of creativity and liveliness. Worship liturgy must be attractive and testify of the worshiper's personal commitment to Christ. This requires obedient creativity in shaping attractive liturgical forms that appeal worshipers to surrender their lives to Christ and serve Him in their daily lives.

Ellen White beautifully connects the Christ as the principle of attraction and the principle of obedient creativity and liveliness of liturgical forms.

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[19] *The Youth's Instructor*, December, 31, 1896.
[20] *Signs of the Times*, May 8, 1893 (emphasis added).
[21] *Ibidem.*

"The highest commendation we can receive as Christian workers—explains Ellen White—is to say that we present Christ lifted up on the cross as the object of supreme desire; and how can we do this better than by making religion attractive? Let us show that to us the *worship* of God is not drudgery and dry form, but spirit and life."[22]

Obedient creativity seeks to express our transformation into the likeness of Christ; not our cultural differences, preferences, and habits. Therefore, the forms of worship we create should be trans-cultural rather than cultural conditioned. We should carefully avoid using forms springing or associated with sinful practices and habits. At the same time, our liturgy should be attractive and an expression of the spiritual joy that springs from worshiping Christ.

Principle of Content: Distinguishing between the Holy and Common

Through the elaborated liturgical system of the Old Testament, God intended to show His Holiness. Thus, people, actions, and things God chose to use in the ritual became "holy," that is, consecrated for holy use. For instance, Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, presented "strange fire before God" (Leviticus 10:1). What they probably did was to ignite their censer not with the indicated fire of the altar but used a common not the consecrated source of fire. The consequences were horrific and probably unexpected. "Fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Leviticus 10:2, NKJV). Moses explained God's action to his brother Aaron, "this is what the Lord meant when he said, 'Through those who are near me I will show myself holy, and before all the people I will be glorified' " (Leviticus 10:3, NRSV). In this context, God expressed an important general principle of liturgy: "You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean" (Leviticus 10:10 NIV). God did not only formulate this principle theoretically, but also explain its importance and non negotiability in real life by punishing Nadab and Abihu to death by fire.

This principle specifically relates to congregational worship. Should this principle apply to Christian liturgy? Although God devised the Old Testament liturgical system to be used until Christ's death (Mark 15:38; Matthew 27:51; 2 Corinthians 3:11), He continues to be Holy, and desires

[22] *Signs of the Times*, December 4,1884, emphasis added.

to show Himself Holy in those who approach Him. Moreover, because God's nature and his plan of salvation are immutable (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Hebrews 6:13-18; 13:8), this principle applies to Christian worship. Consequently, we should not use what is common and ordinary before Him. Needless to say, we should not include in Christian worship anything clearly associated with the world or our past sinful life (c.f. Deuteronomy 12:1-6).

Ellen White suggests, "no one should bring into service the power of imagination to worship that which belittles God in the mind and associates Him with common things. Those who worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth. They must exercise living faith. Their worship will then be controlled not by the imagination, but by genuine faith."[23] In liturgical matters the criterion to include cultural contents in liturgical forms should be what is pleasant to Him, not what appeals to the personal or cultural preferences of worshipers. Worship is about God, not about the worshiper. How can we distinguish between the holy and the common?

According to Ellen White we need to purify our souls,[24] and avoid becoming absorbed in businesses of this world.[25] This counsel is important because failing to differentiate between the sacred and the profane may seem of little importance to postmodern secular people, yet it remains a slippery slope leading to idolatry. "Solomon—explains Ellen White—changed his place of worship to Jerusalem, but his former act in sacrificing in a place not made sacred by the presence of the Lord, but dedicated to the worship of idols, removed from the minds of the people something of the repulsion with which they should have regarded the horrible performances practiced by idolaters. *This mingling of the sacred*

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[23] *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* 1953-1957. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1970: 4, 1145.

[24] "Whatever may be our condition or position in life, it is our privilege to have the faith that works by love and purifies the soul. Faith that produces love to God and love to our neighbor is true faith. This faith will lead to genuine sanctification. *It will increase our reverence for sacred things*" *Sings of the Times*, February, 24, 1890; emphasis added.

[25] "But those who ought to have stood in the clear light, that they might present the attractions of Christ before the people, and lift up Jesus before them as soon as out of the desk, were earnestly preaching of buying and selling real estate, and of investing money in mining stock. *Their minds absorbed in business affairs could not distinguish between the sacred and the common; discernment was blunted, the deceptive power of the enemy was exercised over their minds*" The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials. 4 vols. Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987, 51; emphasis added.

and the profane was the first step in the practice of Solomon which led him to suppose that the Lord was not so particular in regard to the worship of His people. Thus he was educating himself to make still greater departures from God and His work. Little by little his heathen wives led him to make them altars on which to sacrifice to their gods."[26]

Principle of Suspicion: *Sola Scriptura*

Careful application of the principle of suspicion is necessary because in liturgy formation creativity may spring at times from the sinful desires of disobedient hearts. More than two millennia ago, Gideon used his creativity to build an alternate place of worshiping Yahweh around a golden ephod he built with the booty taken from the Midianites (Judges 8:26-27). Gideon's creativity led Israel into licentious worship. "His sin consisted in taking over the prerogatives of the Aaronic priesthood without divine sanction. This deviation from the right prepared the way for wider apostasy both in his immediate family and among the tribesmen."[27]

Ellen White explains the results of Gideon's liturgical creativity. "The course pursued by Gideon proved a snare, not only to himself and family, but to all Israel. The irregular and unauthorized worship led the people finally to forsake the Lord altogether, to serve idols. The ephod and the breastplate were regarded with pride, because of their costly material and exquisite workmanship; and after a time were looked upon with superstitious reverence. The services at the place of worship were celebrated with feasting and merriment, and at last became a scene of dissipation and licentiousness. Thus Israel were led away from God by the very man who had once overthrown their idolatry."[28]

In this context Ellen White states the principle of suspicion. "All plans based upon human reasoning should be looked upon with a jealous eye, lest Satan insinuate himself into the position which belongs to God alone."[29] A "jealous eye" meant a "suspicious eye,"[30] a distrustful eye. In other words, we should distrust our reasoning and imagination. We should always

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[26] *The Seventh-Day Bible Commentary*, 2:1025.

[27] Francis D. Nichol ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1978), Jdg 8:30.

[28] *Signs of the Times*, July 28, 1881.

[29] *Ibidem.*

[30] *Webster's 1828 Dictionary,* (Electronic Version by Christian Technologies, Inc., c. 2002), jealous.

subject our thoughts and creations to biblical criticism. Yet, how can we criticize our own thoughts and creations? We should start by assuming that our imaginations are sinful and our opinions tainted. Then, we should test our ideas and liturgical creations by the biblical principles, doctrines, and the principles of worship as detailed earlier in this article. Finally, we should in prayer seek the advice of Brethren of proven wisdom and faithfulness to God's Word.

Principle of Spiritual Effect

When creating or selecting liturgy for congregational worship we should keep in mind that liturgical forms influence the human spirit. Consequently, they should motivate, facilitate, express, and enhance the experience of individual and congregational worship. The spiritual effect of liturgy will be determined by the way in which we understand the origin, nature and existence of worship (see above), and the presence of God. Without a biblical theological understanding of the Divine and human spirits we will not be able to properly assess the spiritual effects of the rituals we choose. By default, we will choose rituals that please our fallen human spirits. Such liturgical forms will not motivate true Christian worship in spirit and truth.

As modern Christians forget that Christ is the Creator, their worship and liturgy progressively lose reverence and awe. With the explicit intention of attracting secular believers, pastors intentionally adapt their liturgical forms to contemporary cultural trends. The spiritual effect of this ecumenical liturgical approach is no longer Christian but worldly. A worldly spirit of familiarity, informality, and casualness replaces the Christian spirit of reverence and awe before the presence of God.

Christ's incarnation does not justify a change in the spiritual effect of liturgical forms. Ellen White correctly explains, "it is dishonoring God to speak of him as though he were on a level with finite man. We should speak with reverence the sacred name of Christ, for, although he humbled himself and became obedient to the death of the cross, yet he thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Let us take this precious name upon our lips with profound reverence. Some have allowed their feelings to control their judgment, in meetings for worship, and have indulged in words and attitudes that have not been in harmony with the solemn worship of God. We have heard men shout and jump, and pound the desk, and use vain repetition, and this they thought was worship to God. But it was not

according to the direction or will of God. All that is coarse in attitude or word makes the service of Christ a matter of ridicule, and brings confusion into the house and worship of God."[31]

Liturgy should always flow from and enhance the experience of worship existing in the heart of the believer. Consequently, when considering congregational liturgical forms, we should carefully examine their effect on the spirit of the believer. This is very important because worship takes place as an inner attitude of the mind, will, and emotions. If what we do in church disturbs our spiritual capacity for receiving the presence of God in His word (principles of existence and nature), we should modify or drop what we are doing, no matter how appealing to the senses our rituals could be.

Instead, liturgical forms should inspire a sense of awe, reverence, and expectation for of the presence of God as necessary condition of worship. In the Old Testament God commanded, "…have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:30, NIV). Following God's command, Paul instructs New Testament believers to offer God "…an acceptable worship with *reverence and awe*" (Hebrews 12:28 NRSV, emphasis added). Reverence and awe are appropriate spiritual effects of liturgy because they prepare our spiritual capacities for receiving the presence of God in His Word.

Reverence is to treat something or somebody with great respect; in other words, to have due regard for someone's feelings, wishes, or rights.[32] Awe is a feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear or wonder.[33] The principles of origin and existence presented above determine the principle of congregational mood. Ellen White explains, "Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One, Himself the Source and Sustainer of all, is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship."[34]

Two decades before the end of the nineteen century Ellen White thought Adventist worship needed to grow in reverence. I think that her comments apply also to Adventists at the beginning of the twenty first

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[31] *Signs of the Times*, February, 24 1890.

[32] James Strong, The *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Showing Every Word of the Text of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), H3372.

[33] See the *Oxford Dictionary.*

[34] *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 1890 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 306; c.f., *The Great Controversy*, 436-437.

century. "It is too true that reverence for the house of God has become almost extinct. Sacred things and places are not discerned; the holy and exalted are not appreciated. Is there not a cause for the want of fervent piety in our families? Is it not because the high standard of religion is left to trail in the dust? God gave rules of order, perfect and exact, to His ancient people. Has His character changed? Is He not the great and mighty God who rules in the heaven of heavens? Would it not be well for us often to read the directions given by God Himself to the Hebrews, that we who have the light of the glorious truth shining upon us may imitate their reverence for the house of God? We have abundant reason to maintain a fervent, devoted spirit in the worship of God. We have reason even to be more thoughtful and reverential in our worship than had the Jews. But an enemy has been at work to destroy our faith in the sacredness of Christian worship."[35]

6. Conclusion

Experimentation with "worship styles" has caused confusion among Adventist believers at the turn of the 21st century. Frequently, creativity in Adventist worship styles boils down to borrowing increasingly secularized liturgical forms from evangelical congregations. Contemporary "worship styles," absorb cultural forms drawn from the entertainment industry. Leaders involved in this drawn out experimentation uncritically assume that even pop cultural forms produced to express worldly and sinful sentiments are acceptable to God. We asked in the introduction, are worship styles a matter of taste or a matter of principle? Is personal taste a reliable principle to shape our corporate worship style? Are there principles we can use to help us shape our worship and choose what we include in it?

Our brief perusal of biblical evidence and Ellen White's thoughts on worship suggests some preliminary answers. Worship is not a matter of taste or cultural preferences but a state of mind and an attitude of the heart. Pastors and believers should start by understanding the clear biblical distinction between worship and liturgical styles. As pastors lead congregational worship they should bear in mind that in our relationship with God worship is the essential core and liturgy an external formality.

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[35] *Testimonies for the Church*. 9 vols. 1855-1909 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 5: 495-496.

Worship may exist without liturgy, but liturgy is meaningless without worship.

Consequently, personal or cultural taste and preference are not reliable principles from which to shape our liturgical forms. Instead, we find in Scripture and Ellen White clear principles regarding worship and liturgical styles that Adventists should understand and use to criticize and modify any cultural form they may want to use in their liturgy. Literally, we cannot introduce in our congregational liturgy anything common unless first we purify it by the carful application of biblical principles of worship and liturgy formation.

We have shown that liturgical forms are contextualized to a series of interlinked principles. They assume principles of liturgy. Principles of liturgy assume principles of worship. Principles of worship assume a life of Christian discipleship. A life of Christian discipleship assumes a broad and deep understanding of theology. And theology assumes the ground of biblical revelation. Liturgical forms must fit perfectly within this multi-layered contextual background. This should preempt any attempt to assimilate liturgical forms from evangelical churches that ground their theology not only from Scripture but mainly from culture and tradition.

In this article we came across a few interlinked principles of personal worship. The transcendence of God the creator originates worship (principle of origin). Discipleship is the condition required for its existence (principle of existence). Spirit and truth are the realm of reality and the general content of the worshiping act (principle of nature). Worship is a pleasant occasion because in it we meet with God our friend (principle of enjoyment). Two principles of congregational worship came to our attention. Congregational worship springs from the presence of God the Creator in His Word through the Holy Spirit (principle of existence). Christ and His cross is the lure that brings worshipers to church (principle of attraction).

We also learned some principles of liturgy formation. Our liturgical forms should be attractive and appeal to worshipers to surrender their lives to Christ and serve Him in their daily lives (principle of creativity). In selecting activities to include in our liturgy we should be careful to distinguish between the holy and the common (principle of content). Because even Jesus' disciples are still involved in the Great Controversy with Satan who expresses himself through the world we should be critical of our own judgments and choices that relate to liturgy formation (principle

of suspicion). Our liturgical forms and ceremonies should help create an atmosphere of reverence and awe necessary to appreciate the presence of God in His Word, and respond to Him in worship (surrender and service) (principle of congregational mood). Each congregation needs to understand these principles and apply them to their concrete experience of congregational worship and liturgical formation.

Finally, I hope we all understand the relative importance of liturgy. Participation in liturgical forms and ceremonies is not worship. True worship can exist without congregational liturgy. Worship is necessary for salvation, liturgy is not. Those who reduce their religious experience to the external forms of worship will not be saved. For them, liturgy becomes legalism and even a form of justification by works. Church goers should keep in mind that God desires "steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6, NRSV).

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Debate Over Justification by Faith: Evangelicals and Catholics

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1. Biblical Understanding of Justification by Faith

Paul says "they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24, RSV), for "a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law" (Rom 3:28 RSV), with even faith a gift (Rom 10:17). Humans are "justified by his blood" (Rom 5:9, ESV). Calvary was the "one act of righteousness" which "leads to justification and life for all men" (Rom 5:18b, ESV). "God made him [Christ] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). Justification is found in Christ, and is received by faith. This has nothing to do with Christ's faithfulness in the covenant which continues human membership in the covenant, as proposed by "New Perspectives on Paul" scholarship. Justification explains how one gets in (not how one stays in) the covenant. Justification is an entry level reality, having to do with how one is saved.

The word justify in Hebrew (*hitsdiq*) and Greek (*dikaioun*) "never refer to the infusion of righteousness, that is the transformation of someone from being ungodly to being virtuous." Justification is the same throughout humans' history, in old and new covenant periods, because it is about the one eternal gospel (Rev 14:6). Hence "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned (*elogisth*) to him as righteousness" (Rom 4:3, RSV), or "counted" to him (ESV). The word "reckoned" or "counted" is mentioned nine times in the chapter. This is a forensic term. It is about the great exchange that takes place in justification, humans become members of the covenant on the basis of Christ substitutionary death for all humans.

The benefits of Christ's death are available from the beginning of sin, for "the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev 13:8b); "scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In thee shall all nations be blessed.'" (Gal 3:8 RSV). For God chose us in Christ from before the foundation of the world (Ephes 1:4). "The Lord Our Righteousness" (Jer 23:6) is already a focus in the old covenant. That's why David said, "God counts (*logizetai*) righteousness apart from works" (Rom 4:6). Here is a forensic statement, God declaring someone to be righteous.

At a deeper level, Christ was "delivered up for our transgressions and raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25, ESV). There is a post-Calvary dimension to God's saving work that is often overlooked. Christ (Rom 8:34) and the Holy Spirit (Rom 8: 26, 27) both intercede in heaven for believers. The Book of Hebrews is like a fifth Gospel, and focuses on Christ post-ascension ministry which is just as important as His ministry on earth (the subject of the four Gospels). If Christians had focused on all that Christ and the Holy Spirit are doing for us in heaven's sanctuary, believers would not have been tempted to look to Mary and saints in intercessary work for which they have no qualifications. For there is only "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all men" (1 Tim 2:5, 6a). Christ alone is qualified to intercede on the basis of His death (Heb 8:3; 9:15, 25-28; 10:12).

Just as Adam's sin is imputed to all humans, so Christ's death deals with sin and His righteousness is imputed to all who will receive justification. Christ's righteousness imputed makes unnecessary any infusion through sacraments or works to merit righteousness. Reckoned righteousness finds the recipient always dependent on the imputed and imparted righteousness of Christ. By contrast, infusion of righteousness focuses on inherent righteousness and works that follow to merit more righteousness. Personal performance and the performance of other humans (Mary and saints) takes the place of sole dependence on Christ crucified, resurrected, and interceding before the Father at heaven's throne. For only Christ Jesus has become "our righteousness, holiness and redemption" (1 Cor 1:30).

2. History

During the first 350 years of the Christian era the doctrine of justification was not an issue like the Christological and Trinitarian debates. Nevertheless seeds were sown in those formative years that bore fruit in the medieval period. For example, just as impassibility (*apatheia*) of God was a philosophical view that questioned God's compassion, so αὐτεξουσία (self-power) was a philosophical term introducing human autonomy to the doctrine of justification (cf. Latin *liberum arbitrium*). Also the Greek word *meromai* (to receive one's share) was translated by the Latin word *meritum* (to be worthy of something) which brought the concept of "merit" into medieval theology, effecting the biblical doctrine of justification. So alien philosophical ideas distorted the biblical meaning of justification, contributing to the Roman concept of justification.

Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

God's call to Augustine to be clothed by Jesus Christ converted him, and influenced his understanding of justification by faith. From Romans 3:20 he knew that justification doesn't come through the law.[1] Rather justification is God's gift through the Holy Spirit. So one is "justified freely by His grace" so grace may "heal" the will to enable one to keep the law.[2] Throughout his writings Augustine glories in God's grace, and justification is by grace, but is isn't a "declared justification" but an "internal justification" for in the context of justification Augustine says God "works in His saints."[3] Augustine asks "For what else does the phrase 'being justified' signify than 'being made righteous'–by Him, of course, who justifies the ungodly man, that he may become a godly one instead?[4] Augustine explains what "justifieth the ungodly" means–"the ungodly maketh pious."[5] "For when the ungodly is justified, from ungodly he is made."[6]

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[1] Augustine, *On The Spirit and The Letter*, *NPNF* First Series 5:88 (14, 15).
[2] *On The Spirit and The Letter*, 89 (15).
[3] *On The Spirit and The Letter*, 113 (65).
[4] *On The Spirit and The Letter*, 102 (45).
[5] *On The Gospel of St. John NPNF* First Series 7:21 (3. 9).
[6] *On the Psalms, NPNF* First Series 8: 22 (Psa 7. 5).

Augustine tells us that he didn't know Hebrew,[7] and he disliked the difficulty of learning Greek.[8] He was therefore limited to the Latin word *justifico*. The etymology of the Latin *justifico* means to "make righteous" rather than to "declare righteous."[9] As David Wright states, "There is general agreement that he took it to mean 'to make righteous' and held to this throughout his writing career."[10]

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

Martin Luther called the medieval church the "Aristotelian church" for it depended on Aristotle more than on Scripture.[11] Sacramental theology (systematized during 1050-1240) linked justification with the sacraments.[12] This alleges that continuous justification is mediated through the church and its sacraments. In the late 12th century the idea of merit for works of continuous justification entered Roman theology.[13] There were five main schools of thought on justification in the late medieval period, and hence among Catholic thinkers (including early Dominican, early and later Franciscan, and medieval Augustinian), with considerable diversity which need not detain us.[14] What is important is the unanimous view of medieval theology that justification is both an act and a process in which the status and nature of humans are altered.[15]

The Summa Theologica[16] is the theological system of Thomas Aquinas. "This brilliant synthesis of Christian thought has had a

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[7] *The Confessions of Augustine*, 164 (11.3. 5).

[8] *The Confessions of Augustine*, 51, 52 (1. 14. 23).

[9] H. George Anderson, T. Austin Murphy, Joseph A. Burgess, *Justification by Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue Vll* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1985), 18.

[10] David F. Wright, "Justification in Augustine," in *Justification in Perspecitve: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challengers.* ed. Bruce I. McCormack, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 56.

[11] Luther rightly speaks of Aquinas's view of the Eucharist as dependent on Aristotle, not on Scripture, and calls the medieval church the "Aristotelian church." in the "Babylonian Captivity," *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1973, 1st 1960), 144.

[12] Alister E. McGrath, I*ustitia Dei: A History of Justification; from 1500 to the Present Day* (London: Cambridge, 1992), 1: 91.

[13] Alister E. McGrath, *Institia Dei,*1: 100-102; see also 109-119.

[14] See McGrath, *Instiutia Dei*,1: 155-187.

[15] Alister E. McGrath, *Institia Dei*, 1:182.

[16] Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981, 1st ET edn.,1911),vol. 1.

decisive and permanent impact on religion since the thirteenth century and has become substantially the official teaching of the Catholic Church."[17] A. G. Sertillanges, O.P. says "The Church believes today, as she believed from the first, that Thomism is an ark of salvation, capable of keeping minds afloat in the deluge of doctrine."[18] However, the system is a veritable source of church traditions, comments from philosophers; and uses the Latin Vulgate, which is not always an accurate translation. Besides this, the system is written in typical medieval scholastic reasoning which is difficult to comprehend for many readers. Although the Catholic church believes the Bible is not easily understood, requiring the magisterium to interpret it, the church apparently and paradoxically believes this much harder writing[19] is "an ark of salvation" for readers.

Aquinas claims that God's being is immutable (doesn't change, Q. 9)[20] and He predestines persons to salvation and reprobation (Q. 23), and the Holy Spirit dwells in humans and gifts them with "sanctifying grace" (Q. 43).[21] However, sacraments of the Old Law "were ordained to the sanctification of man" (Q. 102)[22] (yet "they neither contained nor caused grace"),[23] and sacraments of the New Law are for "the sanctification of man,"[24] for they "contain grace" and are "an instrumental cause of grace."[25] Aquinas claims that, "The sacraments are signs in protestation of the faith

[17] Cover comment on each of the five volumes of the *Summa Theologica*

[18] Cover comments on the five volumes.

[19] One example. "Origin" and "relation" are two levels of reasoning about God: God is a Trinity in which the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son (Q 36); and with respect to relationship, the Holy Spirit is the bond between the Father and Son, because "He is love." Whereas "the Father and the Son love one another" the Holy Spirit, even though the third person in the Trinity, "loves essentially as love proceeding; but not as one whence love proceeds." *Summa Theologica*, 1:190 (Q, 37. 1.1). Put a different way, in an *essential sense* (through their essence) the Father and Son love each other (not through the Holy Spirit); but at the same time in a *notional sense* "the Father and the Son love each other by the Holy Ghost." *Summa Theologica* 1:191 (Q. 37. 1.2). Acts "which designate the order" of origin in the Trinity are called "notional" (1:208 (Q. 41.2.1).

[20] Q = question, as Aquinas arranged his topics as questions.

[21] Last source, *Summa Theologica*, 1:221 (Q. 43. 1. 3).

[22] *Summa Theologica* 2:1068 (Q. 102. 1-11. 5).

[23] *Summa Theologica* 4:2349 (Q. 61. 3. 4).

[24] *Summa Theologica* 4:2342 (Q. 60. 3. 5); cf. 4: 2346 (61. 3. 1), 4: 2348 (61. 3. 1).

[25] *Summa Theologica* 4:2351 (Q. 62. 3. 3).

whereby man is justified."[26] Aquinas believes the Holy Spirit and sacraments sanctify.

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Luther was an Augustinian monk. The Reformation was a protest on behalf of the gospel. Bavinck was right when he said at "issue was nothing less than the essential character of the gospel."[27] Luther considered grace as rooted in predestination, then later, without retracting that view, came to emphasize grace in Christ, with salvation as a universal gift (also Melancthon).[28] Luther would devote more time to justification by faith than any other doctrine, except the doctrine of the Lord's Supper.[29]

Augustine and Luther were converted through reading Romans (13:13, 14 and 1:17 respectively). Augustine changed from a profligate life, and Luther from salvation by works that nearly destroyed him. Luther said "I hated the word 'righteousness'" in Romans 1:17, because he thought "God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner." Then he discovered it meant, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Luther said, "here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates." Later Luther read Augustine's *The Spirit and the Letter* and found he had a similar understanding of the text, "as the righteousness with which God clothes us when he justifies us."[30] Luther considered justification was a doctrine taught in Scripture,[31] and so he reached back beyond the subjectivism of medieval theology to Augustine and Paul.[32]

But did Luther's view of justification change? Carl Trumen believes his view changed between 1515-1520,[33] and Alister McGrath puts the

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[26] *Summa Theologica* 4:2348-2349 (Q. 61. 3. 4).

[27] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Sin and Salvation in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bak er, 2006), 3: 519.

[28] Herman Bavinck, *Dogmatics*, 3:520, 521.

[29] Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1975, 3rd printing, 1st Ger. 1963), 225.

[30] *Luther Works*: *Career of the Reformer 1V* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1960), 34: 336-337.

[31] Eric W. Gritsch, "The Origins of Lutheran Teaching on Justification," in *Justification by Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V11*, eds., H. George Anderson, T. Austin Murphy, Joseph A. Burgess (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1985), 162, 163.

[32] Eric W. Gritsch, "The Origins," 170.

[33] Carl Trumen, professor of historical theology and church history at Westminster Theological Seminary argues for a change in Luther's understanding of justification by faith between 1515-1520. See "*Simul peccator et justus*: Martin Luther and Justification," in

change between 1514-1519.[34] Luther began lecturing on Romans at Wittenberg University in the summer of 1515 and completed the book in 1516, at the end of the summer. From Luther's published notes we gain two insights into his early understanding of righteousness by faith: (1) Outward justification is imputed by God to recipients, so the recipients are sinners (inwardly) but justified (outwardly), or as Luther put it they are "at the same time both righteous and unrighteous" [35] (*simul justus et peccator*); (2) God "has begun to heal him. . . he will continue to deliver him from sin until he has completely cured him."[36] This is "the gift of grace, which begins to take sin away."[37]

Comparing the two insights, the first seems to do with an outward reckoning, but the second is an inward healing; the reckoning seems to be a present extrinsic fact, but the healing begins an intrinsic process that reaches into the future. In simple terms Luther's justification includes sanctification. Luther's change also involves a departure from his earlier belief that human freedom made people capable of receiving justification without the need of God's grace, but now Luther believed that such an acceptance is only possible through God's grace that gifts faith to humans, and thus makes them capable of accepting justification. This new insight seems to have come while exegeting Romans in 1515.[38] "Luther, following Augustine, did not make the distinction between forensic justification and progressive sanctification, that emerges in later Protestantism." It was Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560), Luther's younger colleague at Wittenberg, who introduced the concept of justification as forensic.[39]

Justification in Perspective: Historical Developments and Contemporary Challenges, ed. Bruce l. McCormack (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 73-97. I am indebted to him for leading me to study into this development by going to the original sources, and concur with his findings, and add some of my own.

[34] Alister E. McGrath*, Iustitia Dei: A History of The Doctrine of Justification*; From 1500 to the Present Day (Cambridge, 1996, 1st 1986), 4, after as *Iustitia Dei* 2.

[35] *Luther Works* 25: 257, 258; quote on 258, italic words on both pages.

[36] *Luther Works* 25: 260.

[37] *Luther Works* 25: 261.

[38] Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* 2:1-14.

[39] Norman L. Geisler and Ralph E. MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 98-100, quote on 98. See also Peter Toon, *Foundations for Faith: Justification and Sanctification* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1983), 58.

Luther was the rugged leader that launched the Reformation, whereas Melanchthon was the systematician who wrote down Lutheran thinking with precision. For example in 1521 he wrote *Loci Communes*, which was the first systematic statement of Luther's theology. He also wrote the Augsburg Confession (1530) and its Apology (1531). He complemented the bombastic Luther with his quieter nature and clarity of writing.[40] It can be argued that Melanchthon's word "forensic" to describe justification did not materially change the alien righteousness view of Luther, as both were speaking of a declarative or extrinsic righteousness imputed by Christ in distinction to being made righteous in sanctification.

John Calvin (1509-1564)

Luther and Calvin were brought to Christ out of different experiences (which affected their understanding of salvation): Luther felt the curse of the law and was relieved when he understood forgiveness by faith alone; and Calvin was reticent to leave the Roman church in response to the Reformation, but eventually responded to God's will (basing salvation on God's elective will in eternity). Catholic theology claims that humans must work in order to be saved, Calvin's theology claims that God must work (elect) for a few to be saved. Catholic theology says Christ died for all, Calvin's theology says Christ died for a few. Even though in Roman theology Christ died to save all humans, this is called into question by human works as necessary for salvation. Reformed theology also calls into question Christ's death by his alleged dying only for the elect. So Calvary suffers in both theologies.

On August 1, 1559, justification was finally placed in the "benefits" segment of Calvin's system (Book 3), which focuses on the benefits of Calvary applied to Christians. Calvin is not interested in the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*),[41] which says justification precedes sanctification

[40] R. V. Schnucker, "Melanchthon, Philipp" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2nd edn., 2001), 755, 756.

[41] However, in Book three (1559) Calvin takes up regeneration by faith (3.3) before justification (3.11). This was done to answer the Catholic claim that justification was "legal fiction" and didn't take regeneration seriously. However "Calvin makes justification to be logically prior to–and the foundation of–that bestowal of the Spirit of adoption by which the believer is regenerated." This understands justification as forensic, a verdict of aquittal through imputation. For the problem with this logic see Bruce McCormack, *What's at Stake in the Current Debates?* 103 and 100, 101 respectively.

which precedes glorification (chronological order; note the first two are reversed in 1 Cor 6:11); rather Calvin says about the first two: "Christ. . . justifies no man without also sanctifying him," adding "Though we distinguish between them, they are both inseparably comprehended in Christ. Would ye then obtain justification in Christ? You must previously possess Christ. But you cannot possess him without being made a partaker of his sanctification: for Christ cannot be divided."[42] In other words, union with Christ gives one a saving relationship with Christ, which means a reception of justification and sanctification with little interest in the order of receiving these benefits. In the opening of Book 3 Calvin speaks of the Spirit of sanctification, and that through the Spirit Christ unites himself to humans.[43] As Berkouwer says, Calvin's thought is concentric–salvation in Christ."[44]

Alister McGrath

Oxford University Alister McGrath's book *Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution, A History from the 16th Century to the 21st* (2007) focuses on biblical interpretation by individuals instead of by a church, which McGrath considered a dangerous idea, resulting in the pluralism of Protestantism.[45] McGrath traces a number of factors that led to the Protestant reformation, for some leaders were not moved by the doctrine of justification by faith, as was Luther. McGrath rightly states that if justification is the reckoning of Christ's righteousness to believers what's the point of purgatory?[46] The doctrine also renders "the cult of the saints

[42] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (London: James Clarke, 1962), 2:99 (3.16.1).

[43] John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:462-466 (3.1.1-4).

[44] G. C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: Faith and Justification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977, 1st. 1954), 28.

[45] The dangerous new idea of Protestantism is that everyone has the right to interpret the Bible for themselves, yet this has led to multiple interpretations. The priesthood of all believers helped in this effort, questioning the right of the priestly magesterium as the sole authority to interpret. There are a number of changes to be considered: (1) Possibly soon the Protestant majority will come to an end in the United States; (2) Protestantism has "changed, decisively and possibly irreversibly, in the last fifty years" (eg. Pentecostalism, seeker-sensitive churches); (3) Protestantism is growing rapidly in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

[46] McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea* : *The Protestant Revolution--A History From the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2007), 44.

redundant."[47] "If Luther was right about justification–and his critics insisted that he was not–then the conceptual glue binding the [Roman] church's rites, ceremonies, institutions, and ideas was fatally weakened. He [Luther] had shown that the complex edifice of salvation, largely constructed during the Middle Ages, lacked a solid foundation."[48]

At the beginning of the 20th century Pentecostalism was launched and now numbers half a billion members. There are recent churches in Protestantism that don't see any reason to be defined by the past.[49] McGrath claims that more Protestants become Catholics than viser versa, because of "evangelicalism's lack of historical roots and institutional continuity with the New Testament." (I wonder if McGrath factored into this the number of Catholics becoming Protestants in South American countries?). In a criticism of Luther, McGrath said:

> His [Luther's] fundamental conviction was that the church of his day had lost sight of some fundamental themes of the Christian gospel. After all, the theology he had been taught at Erfurt now seemed to him to be heretical, amounting to the idea of 'justification by works' the notion that humanity can achieve its own salvation by its moral or religious achievements. Yet Luther is open to criticism here, in that he appears to have extrapolated from his own local situation to that of the entire Christian church throughout Europe.[50]

Earlier in his book McGrath points out that Luther responded to indulgences.[51] Indulgences were cause enough for reform, because a blatant repudiation of the free gift of the gospel's salvation, and indulgences were sold far beyond Wittenberg, throughout Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Norway and Sweden.[52] At least this seems to be far more than a local concern, and it gets to the heart of Roman theology–the replacing of the divine by the human. This seems to me to be the fundamental issue that Luther faced, and deserves to be considered the primary reason for the Reformation. It was a fight for the true gospel. It seems reasonable that any

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[47] McGrath, *Christianitys Dangerous Idea*, 250.
[48] McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, 44.
[49] McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, 403.
[50] McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, 58, (parenthesis supplied).
[51] McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, 45-49.
[52] David S. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: The Middle Ages 1294-1517* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960), 6:761, 762.

effort to reintroduce the gospel would include justification by faith alone, to counter the Roman emphasis on salvation by human works.

In summary of this segment on history, the Reformation's decisive break from the medieval period was the distinction between justification and sanctification, yet Luther's justification spilled over into initial sanctification and Calvin finds them as inseparable in Christ. In other words impartation is taken up after imputation in Calvin's *Institutes*, or salvation supplied in Christ (objective side) is applied as benefits through the Holy Spirit (subjective side). Nevertheless it can be argued that relationship with Christ and all that this means is of primary interest to Calvin. Put differently, imputation and impartation are received from Christ and the Holy Spirit in Reformation soteriology. Superficially this seems the same as Roman theology, at least in the joining of justification and sanctification; but the major difference lies in Roman infusion instead of Reformation imputation/impartation, with Roman elevation of human nature producing works capable of merit (considered as on-going justification) rather than a covenant relationship with Christ and the Spirit in Reformation theology. This crucial difference needs to be clearly in mind when evaluating contemporary Catholic-Evangelical attempts to unite on this doctrine.

3. Roman Response
Counter Reformation
Council of Trent (1545-1563)

Roman theologians made a dramatic change between the decade between Augsburg and Ratisbon. Their first response to the Protestant view on justification was to reject it as a novelty, not the same as what Roman theology had taught for a very long time. Then, Roman theologians made a sudden about face, saying that the Protestant view on justification was the same as Roman theology had taught for a very long time, but held to faith as the one point of difference, couching it in vague, ambiguous terms, with the ability to interpret the words in different ways. Ratisbon demonstrated that one point ambiguously presented is sufficient to later neutralize all the concessions made.[53]

[53] James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification : An Outline of its History in The Church and its Exposition from Scripture* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1961, 1st 1867), 141-150.

The concessions didn't hold. Just four years later the Council of Trent was convened (1545-1563), which discussed the subject of justification for seven months in 1547, which totally repudiated the Protestant views with anathemas. This demonstrates that Rome doesn't change, even though she may make carnelian moves to win compromise. This history should cause pause in the contemporary consensus-seeking which is using the same methods.

The intent of Trent's sixth session was to negate the "erroneous doctrine" of justification (their perspective) and to "strictly forbid" any teaching that did not agree with the present decree.[54] Trent is clear that humans are born with original sin, that Jesus Christ came to redeem all humans through his death, and the merit of his passion is bestowed on all who are born again. Justification is a "translation" from the state of sin (through first Adam) to the state of grace (through the second Adam). Without any human merit, God's "quickening and helping grace" enables adults to receive the call of God and they cooperate with grace that is received through hearing, and begin to love him (not fear him) and are moved against sin, to repent, do penance, and are baptized.[55]

Preparation is followed by justification, which includes sanctification, for an unjust person becomes just, an enemy becomes a friend. The final cause of justification is the glory of God and Christ, and eternal life; the efficient cause is the merciful God who washed and sanctifies, the meritorious cause is Christ's death, and the instrumental cause is baptism. The single formal cause is "the justice of God," not that by which He Himself is just, but that by which He makes us just, not merely "reputed" as just but "receiving justice within us" through the Holy Spirit poured out in our hearts. In other words forgiveness of sins, faith, hope, and charity are "infused at the same time." For "faith without works is dead" (James 2:17, 20) and "faith. . . worketh by charity" (Gal 5:6). Neither faith nor works "merit the grace of justification."[56]

The above two paragraphs seem to present the gospel, and no doubt contribute to the contemporary debate that seeks to find similarities between Roman and Reformation views of justification. There are similarities, but

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[54] H. J. Schroeder, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent: Original Text with English Translation* (London: B. Herder Book Co., 1955), 29; after as Trent.

[55] Schroeder, *Trent*, 29-33 (chaps 1-6).

[56] Schroeder, *Trent,*, 33-35 (chaps 7, 8).

the differences determine the extent of the similarity. After the immediate relation between Christ and humans (above) seems to be replaced by a more mechanical means where the (1) infusion of original sin (guilt) from Adam is overcome by an (2) infusion of grace; and (3) deliverance is attained instrumentally through baptism.

The sixth session of Trent dealt with justification as "the most important item" on its agenda.[57] Trent decreed that the Latin Vulgate version of Scripture was the official Bible, but this version doesn't do justice to the Greek word *dikaiosune* which means "to declare righteous" for the Vulgate translates it by the Latin word *iustificare*, which means "to make righteous."[58] To be declared righteous has nothing to do with personal merit, whereas to be made righteous led to works of merit. "The Greek verb refers to something outside of a person in question" whereas "the Latin refers to the qualities of the person in question." This is why the Greek church never had a theology of merit as did the Latin church.[59] The Greek (or Eastern) church emphasized deification (*theosis*) rather than justification (Western church).

According to Trent, justification "is not only a remission of sins but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man through the voluntary reception of the grace and gifts whereby an unjust man becomes just and from being an enemy becomes a friend. . . "[60] Faith, hope, and love are infused into the Christian.[61] With the infusion of justification there begins a process of justification in which works merit further justification.[62] This confuses the categories of justification and sanctification, and questions justification by faith *alone*, because works are included. Shedd is right: "Men are justified in order that they may be sanctified, not sanctified in

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[57] Hubert Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co.,1961 1st1957), 2:171.

[58] Michael S. Horton, "The *Sola*'s of the Reformation" in *Here We Stand: A Call form Confessing Evangelicals*, eds. James Montgomery Boice and Benjamin E. Sasse (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 122; Martin Chemitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1971), 1: 472, 473. The Paris edition of the Vulgate eliminated much of the corrupt transmissions in the 13th century, Alister E. McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea,* 29.

[59] Alister E. McGrath, *Iustia Dei*, 15.

[60] Schroeder, *Trent,* 33 (6.7).

[61] Schroeder, *Trent*, 34 (6.7).

[62] *Trent*, 36 (6.10); see also 45 (Canon 24).

order that they may be justified."[63] Furthermore, Roman infused justification, or "physical justification,"[64] is a state in which only a partial remission of sins is experienced, for there is still guilt and debt to be met by temporal punishment, even beyond this world in purgatory.[65] This means there is no imputation of Christ who forgives all sin in this life. Remaining sin must be atoned for in purgatory. Charles Hodge rightly notes that Roman justification lacks imputation.[66]

Scripture defines justification (or righteousness): "Abraham believed (āman) the Lord and he credited (hāšab) it to him as righteousness (ṣedāqāh)" (Gen 15:6). This text is the basis for the New Testament presentation on justification (Rom 4:3, 9,22; Gal 3:6; James 2:23). The Hebrew word šādaq in the *qal* form means "to be righteous," but in the *hiphil* form means "declare to be righteous." Justification in Scripture is consistently in the *hiphil* form (Protestant view) and not in the *qal* form (Catholic view).[67]

4. Contribution of the "New Perspectives on Paul" Movement to Justification by Faith

No school of thought since the 16th century Reformation, not even the Bultmannian (20th century) has had such an impact on Pauline studies as the New Perspectives on Paul (NPP),[68] contributed by E. P. Sanders, N. T. Wright, and James D. G. Dunn. Donald Hagner said NPP may be called "a Copernican revolution in Pauline studies."[69] D. A. Carson says "the new perspective is the reigning paradigm" (2001).[70] Even though there were

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[63] William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003, 1st 1118, 1889), 800.

[64] Fancis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994), 2:660.

[65] Trent, 46 (Canon 39).

[66] Carles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle of Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960, 1st 1886), 31.

[67] For more on these comparisons see Bruce Demarest, *Foundations of Evangelical Theology, The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997), 364-368.

[68] See Seyoon Kim, *Paul and The New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), xiv.

[69] Donald A. Hagner, "Paul and Judaism: Testing the New Perspective," in Peter Stuhlmacher, *A Challenge to the New Perspective: Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification. With an Essay by Donald A. Hagner* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 75.

[70] D. A Carson, "Summaries and Conclusions" in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* InterVarsity, MI: Baker, 2001), 1:505.

other books before Sanders with his major thesis, his was a turning point because it was the first book following the Jewish Holocaust.[71] Post-Holocaust times found a more friendly view of Jews. Though there are varying ideas that constitute the NPP, they oppose the old perspective that Judaism was a very legalistic system of works-righteousness (from Ferdinand Webster and others). W. Bousset was influenced by this old view, and he taught and influenced Rudolph Bultmann, who became one of the most influential New Testament scholars in the 20th century.[72]

Rudolph Bultmann considered Judaism to be a legalistic religion, totally devoid of grace, and believed that Paul was totally opposed to Judaism. In contrast to an earlier conception of Paul in corporate or cultic terms, Bultmann believed Paul focused on the individual. This was undoubtedly influenced by Bultmann's preoccupation with existentialism (personal existence). As a Lutheran, Bultmann supported forensic justification in Paul's theology, yet this was not an inner change but an "schatological reality" experienced now by the believer. The NPP is a response to Bultmann.

Albert Schweitzer rejected justification by faith as central to Paul, accepting rather "being in Christ." Schweitzer also presented Paul as fully Jewish, and not persuaded by Hellenism.[73] Nevertheless, many scholars didn't follow Schweitzer, believing Paul gained much from Hellenism rather than from Judaism.

W. P. Davis' book *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (1948), "marks a watershed in the history of scholarship on Paul and Judaism,"[74] and paved the way for the NPP because it was the first to present Paul's positive acceptance of Judaism and the law, for his conversion was not from Judaism to a new religion. Christianity was not "the antithesis of Judaism" but "the full flowering of Judaism." For Davies, justification by faith was considered peripheral to the centrality of Christ in Paul's writings.[75]

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[71] Donald A. Hagner, in Peter Stuhlmacher, *A Challenge to the New Perspective*, 76, 77.

[72] See Robert Egolf, "Reinventing Paul" Book Review, http://www.the paulpage.com/Reinvent.html.

[73] See Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle,* Seabury, 1968; *Paul and His Interpreters*, New York, NY: Macmillan, 1950.

[74] E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1977), 7.

[75] W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1965, 1st 1948), 222-223.

Krister Stendall stated that justification by faith was Luther's focus and not Paul's.[76] He critiqued the introspective conscience of the west (not found in the East, in the Orthodox church) but found in Augustine's *Confessions* and Luther's struggle as an Augustinian monk. This was not Paul's struggle in his conversion, for he had a rugged relationship to the law prior to his change of mission to the Gentiles.[77] Stendall dismissed justification by faith as merely an Augustinian-Lutheran experience, but not a biblical experience.

In 1971, Ernst Käsemann, student of Bultmann, believed justification is central to Paul, and to salvation history.[78] Käsemann's view of justification is corporate (rather than individual) and participatory, which basically questioned its forensic reality. Käsemann said, "Nowhere else in Judaism is Hab 2:4 ['the just shall live by his faith' KJV] seen in terms of attachment to a person.[79] He states it again as "a truth which transcends the individual and is directed toward a new world." Here is a "primacy of christology over anthropology."[80]

E. P. Sanders' book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977) launched the NPP movement. Sanders studied a "great bulk" of the surviving Palestinian material from 200 BC to 200 AD[81] discovered that election got one into the covenant, and commandment-keeping was a response to this prior election.[82] "The Rabbis did not have the Pauline/Lutheran problem of

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[76] See Krister Stendall, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West" in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles: and Other Essays* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1976), 78-96. First published in English in the *Harvard Theological Review* :56 (1963), 199-215. cf. John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

[77] It is alleged that Paul was interpreted by the Reformers rather than Paul was interpreted by Paul. For example, from Augustine's *Confessions* to Luther's struggle, the focus was on the quest of a troubled conscience, which was read back into Paul's experience. By contrast Paul was zealously persecuting Christians because He believed this was God's will (see 1 Cor 15:9b; 1 Tim 1:13-16). He was filled with self-righteousness (Phil 3:3-7), not self-condemnation. His Damascus Road encounter with the risen Christ began a revelation of God's will for His life, a call to become God's minister to the Gentiles (Acts 9:3-18).

[78] Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 21-32; "Justification and Salvation History in the Epistle to the Romans," *In Perspectives on Paul* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1971), 60-78.

[79] Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 32.

[80] Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, both quotes, 93.

[81] E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judais* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1977), 18.

[82] E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestine Judaism*, 85.

'works-righteousness.'"[83] The bottom line was the Rabbis understood obedience to be a response to God's love for Israel.[84] Sanders termed this "covenantal nomism."[85] Sanders concludes that because covenant nomism was so pervasive during the four centuries studied (200 BC - 200 AD) that it was "the basic *type* of religion known by Jesus and presumably by Paul."[86]

In the law-court setting, for N. T. Wright, righteousness is not about imputed or imparted righteousness to humans but God's own righteousness (His covenant faithfulness). "Legal fiction" is a well known Catholic analysis of imputed righteousness (merely reckoned to be righteous, when not in reality, as in Luther's theology). So at this point, Wright seems to be close to the Catholic view.[87] Wright says Paul's gospel creates the church, whereas justification defines and sustains it.[88]

James Dunn claims that behind the Catholic-Protestant debate (make righteous-declare righteous respectively) is the more fundamental issue of Christianity's relation to Judaism, or Paul's gospel's relation to his ancestral religion. Traditional New Testament scholarship considered Paul opposed to Judaism as Luther opposed the medieval church.[89] But the NPP claims that Palestinian Judaism was grace-based, their works as a response to grace to maintain their covenant membership rather than to gain entrance or earn merit. In this new context, justification by faith is the way Gentiles can be as acceptable to God as Jews. This is "one of the most vigorous debates in current NT studies."[90]

The immediate context of justification by faith is "the righteousness of God" (Rom 1:16, 17). In Hebrew the word "righteousness" is a "relational concept." For Dunn, God created humans, gave a call to Abraham, and choose Israel, and in so doing was righteous, and understood as faithful. So Dunn considers the verb *dikaio* means both *make righteous* and *reckon*

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[83] E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 100.

[84] E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 100-104, 106, quote on 100.

[85] E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 422.

[86] E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 426.

[87] N. T. Wright, *What Paul Really Said,: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 100-103

[88] N. T. Wright, *What Paul Really Said*, defines, 151, sustains, 158.

[89] James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of The Apostle Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 336-338.

[90] James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 340, 354, 355.

righteous, which practically makes the Catholic/Protestant debates pointless.[91] The NPP, like liberal theology before it, is rooted in historical-critical methods, which are much more interested in alleged sources, than in what Paul says himself. Why should second Temple Judaism be the hermeneutical basis for understanding Paul, when *sola scriptura* looks to the Old Testament, where Scripture interprets Scripture?

Seyoon Kim's doctoral dissertation[92] at Manchester University, under F. F. Bruce (1977), was published in Germany (1981) and in America (1984), which means Kim submitted his dissertation the same year that E. P. Sanders published his *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, which introduced to New Testament scholars a new way to interpret Paul.

Second Temple Jews were engaged in "works of the law" to earn salvation, demonstrated by Paul before his conversion (Gal 1:13-16; Phil 3:3-9). The traditional doctrine of justification was by faith, contrary to any works of law to merit salvation; but the new doctrine of justification (by the New Perspectives on Paul study) was to dismiss circumcision, food laws, and the Sabbath as boundary markers to distinguish between Jews and Gentiles.[93] Whereas the traditional doctrine of justification dismissed all law-keeping *to earn salvation*, the new doctrine of justification dismissed Jewish laws as unnecessary for Gentiles *to become covenant members*.

Proponents of the New Perspectives on Paul consider law-keeping, in second Temple Judaism, to be responsive works to God's grace given in the covenant. Such works were a mark of covenant membership, and were never works to gain entrance into the covenant. Proponents allegedly substantiate this conclusion from the Qumran community. However this conclusion is decisively called into question by J. V. Fesko, as follows: (1) all the law is important and not just a subset of Jewish markers (1QS 5; 1QS 5:10). The law is an entry requirement for covenant membership. For example:

> But when a man enters the covenant to walk according to all these precepts that he may be joined to the holy congregation, they shall examine his spirit in community with respect to his understanding and practice of the Law, under the authority of the

[91] James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 341-344.

[92] Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

[93] See Seyoon Kim, 3.

> sons of Aaron who have freely pledged themselves in the Community to restore His Covenant and to heed all the precepts commanded by him, and the multitude of Israel (1QS 5:20).[94]

Moreover 4QMMT supports the traditional view because legalistic works to earn salvation was a problem at Qumran.[95] Romans 2:21-23 refers to the whole law and not merely to covenant badges. Legalism was a problem that Christ encountered (Matt 5:17-20; 23:1-38; Luke 18:9-14), and He ministered during second Temple Judaism. Works-righteousness was the problem Paul encountered in Rome and in Galatia, and not covenant badges (or subset of the law; circumcision, food laws, and the Sabbath).[96] To understand justification by faith, one must return to the traditional understanding because the New Perspective is at odds with Scripture, and with historical evidence from the Qumran community. Justification is not through works of the law (Rom 4:28), but through faith (Rom 1:17; 3:28), which is a gift of God (Rom 10:17).

5. Roman-Protestant Divide: Evangelicals and Catholics Together Documents Differences Need to be Studied

The Fourth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation convened at Helsinki, Finland in 1963, to hammer out a current statement on the doctrine of justification by faith. Catholic observers were not the reason that the Lutheran leaders made changes towards Rome, because this was achieved through use of the historical-critical method of exegesis.[97] Ernest Käsemann argues "that the historical-critical method is inseparable from Protestantism, is indeed its very genius."[98] This exegetical method is the foundation for the work done between Catholics and Evangelicals in subsequent meetings. The same historical-critical method contributed to the

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[94] J. V. Fesko, *Justification: Understanding The Classic Reformed Doctrine* (Phillipsburg, PA: P&R, 2008), 179.

[95] J. V. Fesko, *Justification*, 180.

[96] J. V. Fesko, *Justification*, 180-182.

[97] Robert D. Preus, *Justification and Rome: An Evaluation of Recent Dialogues* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1997), 21.

[98] James Wm. McClendon, *Doctrine: Systematic Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon1994), 465. See Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, tr. W. J. Montague (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1969), 1-65; R. C. Briggs, *Interpreting the New Testament Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1973), 21-24.

new perspectives on Paul[99] which also questioned justification by faith. Much later, in 1992, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the Lutheran Church in America evaluated the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue Report VII, and said:

> The abject capitulation to the historical-critical method. . . relativized the concept of pure doctrines well as the normative authority of Scripture and jeopardized the honest efforts of Lutherans and Roman Catholics to find any solid consensus on the article of justification. Also, 'new modes of thinking,' a kind of new logic, made doctrinal differences 'not necessarily divisive.'[100]

The LCMS stated: "Having reviewed carefully the 'Commitment Statement' we have come to the conclusion that beneath the 'differences in theological formulation' often noted, there remain substantive differences between the churches which go to the very heart of the Gospel itself and are therefore divisive."[101]

ECT 1: THE CHRISTIAN MISSION FOR THE THIRD MILLENNIUM (1994)[102]

In the Catholic *First Things: The Journal of Religion, Culture and Public Life* (1994),[103] is an article titled "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium."[104] This was the conclusion of a consultation beginning in September, 1992. It states: "We together pray for the fulfillment of the prayer of Our Lord: 'May they all be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, so also may they be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.' (John 17). We together, Evangelicals and Catholics, confess our sins against the unity that Christ

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[99] Guy Prentiss Waters, *The Federal Vision and Covenant Theology : A Comparative Analysis* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 63.

[100] Robert D. Preus, *Justification and Rome*, 22.

[101] *Ibid*, 23.

[102] See Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, *Evangelicals & Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1995).

[103] Charles Colson (Protestant) and Richard John Neuhaus, (Lutheran turned Catholic) led out in the ECT work. Richard John Neuhaus edited the journal *First Things*.

[104] *First Things* 43 (May 1994): 15-24.

intends for all his disciples."[105] They concur that "the scandal of conflict between Christians obscures the scandal of the cross, thus crippling the one mission of the one Christ."[106] Within the one mission of the one Christ they state, "We affirm together that we are justified by grace through faith because of Christ."[107] On the surface this seems to be biblical and welcome. But more importantly, doesn't the alleged daily re-crucifying of Christ in the Catholic mass radically call into question the one mission of the one Christ's unrepeatable sacrifice at Calvary (Heb 7:27b; 9:26)?

In the book *Is The Reformation Over? An Evangelical Assessment of Contemporary Roman Catholicism* (2005), Mark A. Knoll and Carolyn Nystrom devote a chapter to "Evangelicals and Catholics Together."[108] There was much evangelical criticism of ECT 1, particularly because it failed to express salvation as by grace *alone* through faith *alone*. The words alone were the contribution of the Reformation, dismissing all human means to salvation, as found in Catholic theology. ECT 2, in part, was a response to the criticism of ECT 1.[109] In a later *First Things* journal is a report on post ECT 1 study given to differences between Evangelicals and Catholics.[110] In 1996, it was "determined that further progress depended upon firm agreement on the meaning of salvation, and especially the doctrine of justification."[111]

ECT 2: THE GIFT OF SALVATION (1997)

After a full year of study, discussion and prayer, a statement was released in New York City on October 6-7, 1997. It was headed by John 3:16, Christ as Savior of the world, a truth that Calvinists may not be able to accept, because they believe Christ died for the elect alone. The statement admits "serious differences" remain, but all agree that Jesus Christ is the Savior. They refer to biblical texts that Christ is the only Mediator between God and humans (1 Tim 3:5) and that no one comes to the Father except

[105] *First Things* 43, paragraph 2.
[106] *First Things* 43, paragraph 6.
[107] *First Things*, 43, paragraph 12.
[108] *Is the Reformation Over?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).
[109] See *Is the Reformation Over?,* 158-161. This chapter contributed to this segment.
[110] *First Things* 79 (Jan 1998) : 20-23.
[111] *First Things* 79, first paragraph.

through Christ (John 14:6; cf. 1 Pet 3:18).[112] But how is this possible when Catholics believe that the church, Mary and saints are also mediators between God and humans? Even though the statement says atonement was completed at the cross, how does this agree with salvation by works, and purgatory as necessary for atonement in Catholic theology? Evidently Catholics come to these texts and read into them their own traditions. In other words the texts seem qualified by the interpretation of the church, rather than by Scripture interpreting Scripture.

What does the ECT statement say about Justification? "In Justification, God, on the basis of Christ's righteousness alone, declares us to be no longer his rebellious enemies but to be his forgiven friends, and by virtue of his declaration it is so. . . We understand that what we here affirm is in agreement with what the Reformation traditions have meant by justification by faith alone (*sole fide*)."[113] They admit there are differences between declarative righteousness and transformational righteousness, and mention purgatory and devotion to Mary as among further subjects to study.[114] But don't these differences call into question the assumed unity they pronounce in the document? Furthermore, when it comes to the gift of salvation through Christ alone, isn't this called into question by official Roman theology which presents Mary and the saints as participants in human salvation? If Christ is the sole mediator, why is there the need of church, saints, and Mary to mediate? Also, because there are differences between declarative justification and transformational justification, how can justification be considered as a belief that unites Catholics and Evangelicals?

The end of the document declares: "As Evangelicals who thank God for the heritage of the Reformation and affirm with conviction its classic confessions, as Catholics who are consciously faithful to the teaching of the Catholic Church, and as disciples together of the Lord Jesus Christ who recognize our debt to our Christian forbears and our obligations to our contemporaries and those who will come after us, we affirm our unity in the Gospel that we have here professed."[115] Note that Evangelicals believe in the biblical heritage of the Reformation and Catholics believe in the

[112] *First Things* 79, sixth paragraph.
[113] *First Things* 79, tenth paragraph.
[114] *First Things* 79, twentieth paragraph.
[115] *First Things* 79, final paragraph.

traditions of the Church. This is what divided them in the 16th century Reformation, so wouldn't these differences still divide them, in spite of saying they teach the same Gospel? Therefore it seems hollow when they say, "We reject any appearance of harmony that is purchased at the price of truth."[116]

ECT 2 stated, "Justification is central to the scriptural account of salvation, and its meaning has been much debated between Protestants and Catholics. We agree that justification is not earned by any good works or merits of our own; it is entirely God's gift, conferred through the Father's sheer graciousness, out of the love that he bears us in his Son, who suffered on our behalf and rose from the dead for our justification."[117] Although this seems an advance over ECT 1, and in agreement with Scripture, the official Catholic view of justification is an infusion (not the Protestant impartation), and the infusion enables the recipient to merit further justification.

Pope John Paul 11's encyclical *Ut Unam Sint* ("that they may be one"), based on Christ's prayer for Christian unity, issued May 25, 1995, gives insight into how differences are to be evaluated. "The examination of such disagreements has two essential points of reference: Sacred Scripture and the great Tradition of the Church. Catholics have the help of the Church's living Magisterium."[118] The inclusion of Tradition as equal with Scripture (see Vatican 11)[119] means the Catholic church uses human ideas along with divine revelation in Scripture, and how can those who believe in *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) accept resolution of differences based merely on the uninspired ideas of humans that often are contrary to Scripture?

ECT 3: YOUR WORD IS TRUTH (2002)

There are obvious differences between Protestants who place Scripture above the church and Catholics who place the church above Scripture—in

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[116] *First Things* 79, ninth paragraph.

[117] *Is the Reformation Over?*, 159-160, cited from "The Gift of Salvation," *Christianity Today*, Dec. 8, 1997, 36.

[118] *The Encyclicals of John Paul ll* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1996), no. 39: 937.

[119] "Consequently, it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and sacred scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence." *Documents of Vatican 11* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), 117 (2.2.9).

a living tradition that adds to and takes away from Scripture, and the majesterium that officially interprets Scripture for the church; whereas Protestants ideally allow Scripture to interpret Scripture (*sola scriptura*). Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, who led out in organizing the ECT meetings, also edited a book *Your Word is Truth* (2002). In it the Catholic theologian Avery Cardinal Dulles wrote, "While revering Scripture as containing the word of God in unalterable form, she [Catholic church] denies that Scripture is sufficient in the sense that the whole of revelation could be known without tradition."[120] By contrast Protestants believe Scripture interprets Scripture, and doesn't need human traditions to do so. Hence it doesn't make sense for the joint statement to affirm, "that Scripture is the divinely inspired and uniquely authoritative written revelation of God; as such it is normative for the teaching and life of the church."[121]

The title *Your Word is Truth* cannot mean *Catholic Tradition is Truth*; because it sometimes discounts biblical truths (such as the sacramental work of the church, Mary and saints to obtain salvation, which are human additions that question the biblical truth that Christ is the only Savior, 1 Tim 2:5). In other words, the official Catholic understanding of Scripture discounts the unofficial ECT 3 document. How can papal infallibility,[122] the alleged re-crucifixion of Christ in the mass, and the numerous changes made to God's Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-17)[123] be the same as "Your Word is Truth?" For these Catholic traditions replace the truths of God's Word, and replace Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God.

ECT 4: THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS (2003)

This document was published in another edition of *First Things*.[124] Communion concerns union of beliefs as well as union in fellowship. Are Catholics and Protestants experiencing both? There are differences among

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[120] Avery Dulles, "Revelation, Scripture, and Tradition" in *Your Word is Truth*, eds. Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 57.

[121] "Your Word is Truth" document in *Your Word is Truth* (1-8), 5. The declaration affirms more, but the more doesn't seem to take seriously the uniquely authoritative biblical revelation which is normative for the teaching and life of the church.

[122] Infallibility was even questioned by Catholic theologian Hans Küng in *Infallible: An Inquiry*, trans. Edward Quinn (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1972, Ger. 1970).

[123] See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori, 1994), 505-611.

[124] See *First Things,* March 2003, 26-33.

Protestants and Catholics about the saints. One big hurdle is the Catholic belief in purgatory which requires human intercession and human payments. There is a difference about the number of sacraments necessary for salvation, two (baptism and Lord's Supper) for Protestants and five additional sacraments for Catholics.

Communion is a union or relationship which is impossible for Protestants in terms of sharing in the Catholic mass, where the priest allegedly re-crucifies Christ. Protestants believe in a once for all, not to be repeated sacrifice, at the cross (Heb 7:27). Although all true Christians are in a relationship with Christ, who is the Head of the body which is the church, does it follow that there is only one true church? What about the following statement? : "The church itself can be understood as a sign and instrument of grace instituted by the one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ, and, through the gospel, mediating his grace to the world. While the ancient formula 'outside the Church no salvation' may lend itself to misunderstanding. We agree that there is no salvation apart from the Church [Catholic church], since to be related to Christ is necessarily to be related, in however full or tenuous a manner, to the Church which is his body."[125]

The latest Catechism (1994) states, "the Church is catholic because Christ is present in her. 'Where there is Jesus Christ, there is the Catholic Church.' In her subsists the fullness of Christ's body united with its head; this implies that she receives from him 'the fullness of the means of salvation' which he has willed: correct and complete confession of faith, full sacramental life, and ordained ministry in apostolic succession."[126] In other words, "the [Catholic] Church is 'the universal sacrament of salvation.'"[127] "The Church has been divinely sent to all nations that she might be 'the universal sacrament of salvation.'"[128]

Other churches are called "separated Churches" and not "sister churches;" because the Roman church calls itself the "mother Church." Communion with these separated churches is described as follows: "For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth

[125] *First Things*, March 2003, 30.
[126] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 220 (830).
[127] *Vatican 11*, 247 (4. 4. 45).
[128] *Vatican 11*, 584 (13. Preface).

entrusted to the Catholic Church."[129] In other words there is only one source for the fullness of grace, all other churches derive grace from that source whether they know it or not. The Roman Church reaches out to all humans to gift them salvation through the Church. In fact mother church reaches out to gather all humanity into her embrace.

This replaces Christ as the only source of salvation, the fullness of which is found in Him alone, and not confined to any church (cf. Matt 23:37). True communion of the saints is found in communion with Him. Carefully worded statements which seem to reflect, to some degree, the communion of saints, must always be interpreted against the unchanging official belief that the Roman church is the only church Christ established, and outside of that church there is no salvation. In other words, all the ECT documents must be understood within this end-time plan of the Roman church. While the Roman church claims to be the only source for the fullness of salvation, it dispenses non-biblical traditions as a means to God and salvation. By contrast, Christ said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6).

Catholic priest, Richard John Neuhaus argues that "justification by faith" is "a theological formula devised sixteen centuries" after the church; and claims "The Christian reality, comprehensively understood, is the Church. Surely it is the Church that judges the adequacy of theological formulations and not vice versa."[130] This apparently overlooks the fact that justification by faith is presented in the Old Testament book of Habakkuk (Hab 2:4), long before any Christian church was in existence.

Facing a common enemy (secularism, with its anti-family values, abortions, gay rights, and moral relativism), Catholics and Evangelicals have strained at hermeneutics to bury the anathemas of Trent and those of the Reformers, as if the contemporary attack on the gospel by secularism is more important than the medieval Roman attack on the gospel (another kind of secularism). It is recognized by some that there must be a consensus about justification, or there will be no other consensus. So Evangelicals and Catholics together focus on common points of agreement, and overlook the differences that remain, as if the differences today are not as valid as they were in the sixteenth century. There is one important difference between

[129] *Vatican 11*, 346 (6. 1. 3).

[130] Richard John Neuhaus, *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission*, eds., Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus (Dallas, TX: Word, 1995), 207.

Roman and Reformation understanding of justification, that is infusion (Roman) and imputation (Protestant). Roman infused justification doesn't do justice to biblical imputation.

Council of Trent Still Influential

It is clear from the ECT documents that the anathemas of Trent and the Reformation hurled at each other in the 16th century have been dismissed through the Justification debates. On the one hand this seems that the stand of the Catholic church against the Reformation made at Trent no longer exists. On the other hand, we must ask if there is evidence that Roman theology hasn't essentially changed since the Council of Trent?

Many believe that Vatican Council 11 (1963-1965) marked a change in the Roman Catholic Church (*aggiornamento*). It is true the Council focused on other denominations and religions, not done before. This was for ecumenical reasons, to bring the "separated brethren" back into the church, and reach out to other religions. In Vatican 11 the Roman church reached out as a global player to achieve its global ambitions (see Rev 13:1-4; 11-16; 17:1-18). However, consider evidence that the Council of Trent is still influential today.

1. Vatican 11 endorsed Trent: "This sacred council accepts the venerable faith of our ancestors. . . and it proposes again the decrees of the Second Council of Nicea, of the Council of Florence, and of the Council of Trent."[131]

2. Vatican 11 refers to "The Fathers of this sacred Synod, furthering the work begun by the Council of Trent. . . ."[132]

3. The "veneration of the saints, Marian devotions, and eucharistic adoration." which Protestants revolted against in the Reformation, are all continued after Trent.[133] In fact since Trent Mary has been elevated to heights not endorsed at Trent.[134]

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[131] Austin Flannery, O. P., gen ed., *Vatican Council 11: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, rev. ed. (Costello, 1988), 1: 412.

[132] *Vatican 11*, 456-457 (9.7. Conclusion).

[133] See Richard P. McBrien, *The Church: The Evolution of Catholicism* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2009), 85.

[134] G. C. Berkouwer, *The Conflict with Rome*, trans. Supervisor, David H. Freeman (Philadelphia, PA: P&R, 1958), 174. cf. a fresco in the Vatican where Mary is "high in the center with the Father and Son seated on her left and right as instruments of her all-powerful will." *Ibid*, 162.

4. Vatican 11 continues the focus on the infallibility of the Pope proclaimed in Vatican 1.[135] In Vatican 11 "there is in actuality no repudiation of Trent, or of the Vatican Council [Vatican 1]. If anything, when Trent or the first Vatican Council are mentioned, the emphasis is never critical."[136] In fact, "notwithstanding the apparent pastoral tone and the cultivation of an ecumenical spirit, there can be little doubt that the documents of the second Vatican Council follow in the tradition of Trent and the first Vatican Council."[137] Those stressing discontinuity of Vatican 11 with Trent and Vatican 1, "have occasionally forgotten that the Council [Vatican 11] retracted nothing in the dogmas of Trent and Vatican 1."[138]

5. With respect to Scripture and Tradition, the view of Trent continues in Vatican 11: "'Therefore both sacred tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence' (DV 9). This, of course, is a verbatim quotation from the Council of Trent in whose footsteps the Fathers of Vatican 11 have declared their intention to follow (DV 1)."[139]

6. In the latest Catholic Catechism (1994), justification is not an entry level phase of salvation; it "is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man."[140] This is the same as Trent. Eberhard Jüngel's book *Justification: The Heart of the Christian Faith* (1999) evaluates the *Joint Declaration* saying it "promised so much." But added, "In my judgment at least, there were no sound theological foundations laid here." In fact, there are "pronouncements which almost without exception move in the area and on the level of the *Decree Concerning Justification* which the Roman Catholic Church had adopted at

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[135] *Vatican 11*, 48-49 (1. 3. 25).

[136] Henry T. Hudson, *Papal Power: Its Origin and Development* (Unicoi, TN: Trinity Foundation, 2008, 1st 1981), 128.

[137] Henry T. Hudson, *Papal Power*, 130.

[138] Hermann Pottmeyer, "A New Phase in the Reception of Vatican 11: Twenty Years of Interpretation of the Council," in Giuseppe Albergio, Jean-Pierre Jossua, and Joseph A. Komonchak, eds., *The Reception of Vatican 11* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1987), 40. See Richard P. McBrien, *The Church*, 199.

[139] See Timothy George, "An Evangelical Reflection on Scripture and Tradition" in *Your Word is Truth: A Project of Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, eds. Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 34.

[140] *Ibid*, 482 (# 1989).

the Council of Trent in 1547 on the basis of, and more particularly *against*, the Reformers' doctrine of Justification."[141]

Paul Schrotenboer, general secretary for the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, noted (1987) that Vatican 11 makes no new contribution to the debate on justification by faith, and concludes, "Apart from a new Roman Catholic confession on justification by faith, Trent remains a major barrier between the heirs of the Reformation and Roman Catholicism."[142] So Rome seems to be the same, so who is changing? David Wells noted, "The evangelical world, in fact, is now coming apart because its central truths [like justification by faith alone], what once held it all together, no longer have the binding power that they once had and, in some cases, are rejected outright with no following outcry."[143] Bruce McCormack said, "theological confusion" among Reformation churches over justification by faith is "hastening the demise of Protestantism in the West."[144]

D. A. Carson adds (2005), that "paid masses to release souls from purgatory are still notoriously common in many parts of the Catholic world. As for the fundamental doctrinal issues that divided Reformers and Catholics half a millennium ago, although the polemic today is more courteous, the current pope [John Paul 11) and strong voices in the Curia such as Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger [who superintended the 1994 Catholic Catechism, and is now Pope Benedict XV1], are strictly Tridentine [representing Council of Trent]. Read the Current Catechism on, say, justification."[145] So Trent is still influential, and true union between Evangelicals and Catholics can only be achieved through embracing the biblical Gospel with its salvation through Scripture alone, by faith alone, through Christ alone. The words "alone" are crucial in the quest for true union.

7. The Pope commissioned the Council of Trent to come up with a different interpretation than the historicist view of Prophecy, which the Reformers

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[141] Eberhard Jüngel, *Justification: The Heart of the Christian Faith*, tr., Jeffrey F. Cayzier (London: T & T Clark, 2006, Ger. 1999, 1st et, 2001), xxxiv, italics his.

[142] Paul G. Schrotenboer, *Roman Catholicism: A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988, 1st 1987), 66.

[143] David F. Wells, "Foreword," in *By Faith Alone: Answering the Challenges to the Doctrine of Justification*, eds., Gary L. W. Johnson & Guy P. Waters (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 13.

[144] Bruce L. McCormack in *Justification*: *What's at Stake in the Current Debate*? 83.

[145] D. A. Carson. *Becoming Conversant with Emerging Church* : *Understanding a Movement and its Implications* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 173-174.

used to point to the Roman church as Antichrist. The Jesuits went to work, and eventually Luis De Alcasar suggested Preterism (past) and Francisco Ribera suggested Futurism (future), and both deflected attention away from the present, and hence away from the church. Futurism is widely accepted by Protestants, and so Trent still influences them to not discern the Roman church as antichrist.

8. Vatican 11 states that, "The Spirit guides the Church into the fullness of truth."[146] Statements of the infallible Pope (speaking *ex cathedra*) are "irreformable, for they are pronounced with the assistance of the Holy Spirit."[147] This is why there is a basic continuity between Trent and subsequent doctrinal statements.

6. Protestant Decline

Lutheran pietism didn't emphasize forensic justification (declared righteous), because they were more interested in experience, concentrating on believers being made righteous. This reminds us of Orthodox theology with its desire to experience God mystically, which also has no interest in justification by faith. Today Protestants come to debate Roman theologians with a weakness that makes a difference, as noted by a number of scholars:

> In our day, the doctrine of justification is widely ignored, rarely central, and not infrequently denied outright by Protestant—tragically, even evangelical—theologians and pastors. If the statistics cited above are in any way indicative of reality, 87 percent of Americans evangelicals are practicing medieval Roman Catholics in their view of how one relates to God.[148] Today one can easily find theological professors at leading evangelical institutions who no longer find justification by faith alone to be true, much less necessary.[149] Michael S. Horton

> When we examine our own position today, it is astonishing to find how close we have come to the Roman view even in the Church of Scotland. How frequently, for example, we find that appeal is made to 'Christian

[146] *Vatican 11*, 17 (1.1.4).

[147] *Vatican 11*, 48-49 (1.3.25).

[148] "The Solas of the Reformation" in *Here We Stand: A Call from Confessing Evangelicals*, eds. James Montgomery Boice and Benjamin E. Sasse (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 123.

[149] Foreword to R. C. Spoul, *Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 13.

> instinct' or to 'the mind of the Church' over against the plain utterances of Holy Scripture, and often just at those places where the Word of God offends our will, opposes our habits, or cuts against the grain of our desire? And how massive is the effect of our several traditions upon the interpretations of the Bible? How easy it is to allow the Presbyterian tradition to determine our reading of the New Testament especially when it is a question of justifying our tradition before the critique of others! There can be no doubt that every one of the great Churches of the Reformation, the Lutheran, the Anglican, and the Reformed, has developed its own masterful tradition, and that that tradition today exercises massive influence not only over its way of interpreting the Bible and formulating its doctrine but over the whole shape and direction of its life. . . It is high time we asked again whether the Word of God really does have free course amongst us and whether it is not after all bound and fettered by the traditions of men.[150] Thomas F. Torrance

> On the basis of the above analysis, it will be clear that there exist real differences between Protestant and Roman Catholics over the matter of justification. . . .In recent years, there appears to be increasing sympathy for the view that these differences, although of importance in the Reformation period, no longer possess the significance that they once had. This is not to say that the Christian denominations are agreed on the matter of justification, for it is obvious that their respective teachings have a very different 'feel' or 'atmosphere' to them. It seems that in the modern period the Christian denominations have preferred to concentrate on their points of agreement, rather than draw attention to their historical disagreements.[151] Alister McGrath

David Wells noted, "The evangelical world, in fact, is now coming apart because its central truths [like justification by faith alone], what once held it all together, no longer have the binding power that they once had and, in some cases, are rejected outright with no following outcry."[152] Bruce McCormack said, "theological confusion" among Reformation churches

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[150] T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (London, SCM, 1965), 164-164.

[151] Alister E. McGrath, *Justification by Faith: What it Means for Us Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), 71. McGrath wrote this six years before the "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" statement in March, 1994.

[152] David F. Wells, "Foreword," in *By Faith Alone: Answering the Challenges to the Doctrine of Justification*, eds., Gary L. W. Johnson & Guy P. Waters (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 13.

over justification by faith is "hastening the demise of Protestantism in the West."[153]

Even though written in 1965, my major professor at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, T. F. Torrance, made a statement that is still true: "Justification by Christ alone calls in question all systems and orders, and calls them in question because Jesus Christ alone is central and supreme in the one Church of God. In any true theological system, justification is by reference to Christ alone, for conformity to Christ as the Truth of God for us is the one ultimate principle of unity. Likewise justification in ecclesiastical order or polity ought to be through appeal to Christ alone. Our quarrel with the Church of Rome in doctrinal matters concerns the centrality of Jesus Christ, the primacy and supremacy of Christology which is so obscured and compromised by Roman doctrines of merit and tradition, and above all by Maryology."[154]

Protestant theologians have joined Roman theologians in placing tradition above Scripture, as the foundational reason for their decline. Both sides come to Scripture using critical tools, constrained by an external mission (to defeat secularism), but blind to the their secular approach to sacred Scripture. The Bible fired the Reformation, exposing some Roman doctrines as non-biblical. Today that Protestant prophetic voice has been largely muted because of the de-construction of Scripture which alone can judge the authenticity of human theological conclusions. Today, a number of evangelical theologians question Scripture as revelation, relegating it to a mere witness to revelation.

7. Conclusion

The New Perspectives on Paul (NPP), New Covenant Theology (NCT), and Federal Vision (FV) reject the doctrine of justification by faith alone (*sola fide*), the article on which the church stands or falls (*articula stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*).

R. Albert Mohler Jr., President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said, "By this historic and crucial measure [Justification by faith, the article on which the church stands or falls] evangelicalism in its contemporary form is largely falling–and falling fast." He concludes, "The drama of the gospel has not changed, but the audience for evangelical

[153]Bruce L. McCormack in *Justification*: *What's at Stake in the Current Debate*?, 83.
[154] T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (London: SCM, 1965), 165.

theology *has* changed–and not for the better. The emergence of these new systems of thought [New Perspective on Paul and Federal Vision], neither of which is as new as its proponents suggest, indicates a dangerous and potentially fatal weakening of evangelical conviction and doctrinal discernment."[155]

Abraham Kuyper said in Scripture "justification occupies the most conspicuous place. And is presented as of greatest importance for the sinner." It is "the very kernal of the *Reformation*, which puts this doctrine of 'justification by faith' oddly and clearly in opposition to the 'meritorious works of Rome.'" The Reformed rightly urged "not to merge justification and sanctification."[156] The Reformers urge that there be no merging of justification and sanctification. Protestants would do well to listen to Catholic apologist Robert Sungenis.

> Between Catholics and Protestants lies a great divide concerning whether the Christian has imputed or infused righteousness. Indeed this difference is probably the most crucial in the ongoing debate, because it encompasses the most theological territory. In fact, the original motivation of the Reformation was to distance itself from the medieval concept of infused righteousness formulated largely by the theology of Augustine.[157]

Karl Barth adds:

> [Trent] 'speaks of the good works of the regenerate man, who is only a little sinner and commits only tiny sins, and who is the happy position of being able to increase the grace of justification in co-operation with it, and even to augment the degree of his eternal bliss. The practical consequence of all this is that the misery of man is not regarded in any way as serious or dangerous either for Christians or non-Christians. The Reformation communions could not unite with a Catholic Church which held this doctrine, and they cannot accept the call to reunion with it to-day.'[158]

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[155] R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "Afterword: A Change in the Audience, Not in the Drama," in *By Faith Alone*: *Answering the Challenges to the Doctrine of Justification*, eds., Gary L. W. Johnson & Guy P. Waters (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007) 207.

[156] Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979, 1st 1900), 354, 355.

[157] Robert A. Sungenis, *Not By Faith Alone*: *The Biblical Evidence for the Catholic Doctrine of Justification* (Goleta, CA: Queenship Publishing Co., 1997), 299.

[158] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), 4/2, 498.

> But with its doctrine of justification the Roman Church closed the door to self-reformation and deprived itself of all possibility of seizing the initiative in uniting the divided Church. It was impossible for the Evangelical Churches to return to fellowship with Rome when the decisive point of dispute was handled in this way. They could not surrender truth to unity.[159]

Barth's statements need to guide the contemporary process, for arguably truth has been surrendered for unity, and that is too high a price to pay for the war against secularism, for only truth will overcome error. False theology is just as secular as any other secularism, but more insidious because it is in the church rather than outside.

Richard John Neuhaus stated the Catholic difference from Protestants. "For the Catholic, faith in Christ and faith in the Church are one act of faith."[160] This is because Catholic theology identifies the church and Christ, for the church is alleged to be literally the "body of Christ" instead of metaphorically, as in Protestant theology. I concur with Mark Saucy that the soteriological debate between Evangelicals and Catholics has a deeper level in biblical ecclessiology. Christ as prophet, priest, and king cannot be confined within a church (as in Roman theology) because He is the head of the church (Ephes 5:23).[161] In fact, "the Church is *only* the Body of which He is the Head."[162]

In other words it is Christ who justifies, and not the church. In spite of all the work of ECT, there cannot be true union on justification unless the Roman church gives up its identity with Christ, because the church cannot be the extension of the incarnation. The church isn't Christ, nor is Christ the church. The ascended Christ was addressed as God by the Father (Heb 1:8). He is exalted and seated at the Father's right hand (Acts 2:33), and has

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[159] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark,1961), 4/1, 626. Although Barth wrote these comments in 1955, and 1953 respectively, they still have importance in the contemporary ECT debate.

[160] Richard John Neuhaus, "The Catholic Difference," in *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission*, eds. Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus (Dallas, TX: Word, 1995), 216.

[161] Mark Saucy, "Evangelicals, Catholics, and Orthodox Together: Is the Church the Extension of the Incarnation" in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, June 2000 (43 #2), 193-212.

[162] T. F. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement in the Church : Order and Disorder* (London: Lutterworth, 1959) 1:106.

all authority in heaven and earth (Matt 28:18a). To be Christian, the church must remain submissive, humble, and under Christ's authority–under the One who is truly infallible. Nor is it good enough to say bishops preside "in place of God over the flock"[163] so that "the faithful must cling to their bishop,"[164] because the church is "the universal sacrament of salvation."[165] That's not what Peter (the alleged first pope) said: "Salvation is found in no one else [besides Christ], for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Christians don't need mediators to come to Jesus Christ, for He is the only mediator between God and humans (1 Tim 2:5), the only authorized priest in the Christian era (Book of Hebrews). "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb 4:16). The good news is, Christ "is able to save completely those who come to God through him [not through a church, human priests, saints or Mary], because he always lives to intercede for them" (Heb 7:25).

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[163] *Vatican 11*, 40 (1.3.20).
[164] *Vatican 11*, 52 (1.3.27).
[165] *Vatican 11*, 79 (1.7.43).

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The Duties and Responsibilities of the Seventh-day Adventist Theologian[1]

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I. Introduction

The duties and responsibilities of the Adventist theologian in relation to the message, mission, and unity of the Church are both definable and elusive. On the one hand we intuit what they are. On the other hand there are differing ideas of just what those duties and responsibilities entail.[2] Even if there were consensus, there will always be something about them that is hard to put into words. Sometimes (and for some of us) the deeper level of the theologian's duties and responsibilities isn't often thought about, let alone articulated. We could easily spend time enumerating the obvious, the more measurable tasks and duties of interpreting Scripture (exegesis, hermeneutics, biblical theology), instruction and classroom pedagogy, scholarly research and publishing, guiding students in their projects, speaking in behalf of, consulting or critiquing the Church, penetration of influential social spheres (media, fellow scholars, seminaries), even constructing a systematic interpretation of the vision and conviction of biblical faith.

However, I would have us look at a larger more intangible perspective that is often forgotten or overlooked in the nitty-gritty of the duties and responsibilities which fill our lives and daily routines (and

[1] The forgoing was originally one of the plenary presentations at the Second International Bible Conference sponsored by the 2006 General Conference Biblical Research Institute and held in Izmir, Turkey, July 14, 2006.

[2] Patrick Granfield, *Theologians at Work* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1967); Monika K. Hellwig, *The Role of the Theologian in Today's Church* (Sheed & Ward, 1987); Philip E. Hughes, "The Creative Task of Theology," in *Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology* (ed. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969).

toward which we so often gravitate in our thinking when asked, "What do you do?"). For some, that larger more intangible perspective includes things like being a myth-maker, a fool who destroys myths, a comforter, a builder who constructs a systematic interpretation of the vision and conviction of faith, an archivist, a critic, an archeologist, a ghost (ideas generated become so accepted that the theologian's name who generated the idea is forgotten).[3] The intangibles we will focus on here include matters of stewardship, biblical focus, character, and worldview.

It would be easy to consider the matters I am about to explore in this paper as more pastoral than theological, more for the elder or pastor than the scholar or theologian, as somehow less scholarly or academic and more hortatory (preaching) than this topic requires, but I would argue that the greatest challenge of Seventh-day Adventist scholarship and theology today lies precisely in the issues I raise. Our great need is more a matter of character and spirit, biblical focus and measure, attitude and frame of reference, than in creative thinking, solid scholarship, and academic freedom. God has blessed His Church with able thought leaders who are profoundly skilled to deal with both Scripture and the issues His people face. There is creative thinking, solid scholarship, as well as large freedom in which to work new ideas and press new frontiers consonant with our Seventh-day Adventist faith. Yet, the power and effective influence of their scholarly contribution and theological work is diminished in proportion to how the deeper, more intangibles we discuss here are both realized in their personal (and shared) experience and seen as a fundamental base-line of their duties and responsibilities.

In the midst of outlining some very tangible duties and responsibilities of the Church's first-century thought leaders, the Apostle Paul reminds Timothy of the deeper, intangibles of his role as a young leader/theologian of the Church. In the fourth chapter of 2 Timothy, he tells of a time when people will not put up with sound doctrine (2 Tim. 4:3).[4] They "will turn away their ears from the truth" and "turn aside to myths" (2 Tim. 4:4). They will stop listening to truth, refuse it, reject it, desert it. They will swerve off truth's straight path toward mere myths. In effect, people will not put up with correct biblical teaching. They will

[3] Hellwig, *The Role of the Theologian in Today's Church*.

[4] For a discussion on Pauline authorship see George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 4-52; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (vol. 46; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), xivi-cxxxv.

tune out what they don't wish to hear and follow teachers (theologians or would-be-theologians) who say what they want to hear. In every period of Christian history there have been times during which men refused to listen to sound doctrine. We know that the apostasy, which Paul envisioned, happened very early in Christian history and was even at work in his day (2 Thess. 2:3-7; Acts 20:28-31). But the implications here are that as history continues onwards toward the consummation, this situation grows only worse. It does not go away. It will not go away.

"Who will have a passion for the biblical truth when I am gone? What will happen to the gospel?" This was the question that dominated and vexed Paul's mind as he lay in chains, and to which he addressed himself in this second letter to Timothy. Already in his first letter Paul had pleaded that Timothy keep safe "the deposit" of biblical truth and understandings, which had been entrusted, to him (1 Tim. 6:20). But since his first letter, the situation had worsened and the apostle's appeal thus became more urgent. So he reminds Timothy that the precious gospel was now committed to him (2 Tim. 1:13, 14), and that it was now his turn to assume responsibility for it, to teach it and preach it, to defend it against attack and against falsification, and to ensure its accurate transmission to the generations to come.[5] Guard the truth, Timothy. Suffer for the truth, continue in the truth, proclaim the truth, explain it, and press it. Preserve what you have received concerning it, at whatever cost, and hand it on to faithful men who in turn will be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2).

In this second letter of Timothy we find a seasoned theologian mentoring a younger theologian for the theological realities ahead.[6] In

[5] John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 20-21.

[6] The Epistles of Timothy (and Titus) have long been know as Pastoral Epistles, but this designation is not strictly correct because they cannot be called manuals of pastoral theology. Nevertheless, these works contain written instructions about methods and procedures in the respective churches for which Timothy and Titus were temporarily responsible. They were not "pastors" in the usual, present-day sense of the term. They were not ministers of local congregations as much as they were vicars of Paul, i.e., his special envoys or deputies sent by him on specific missions. They were entrusted with concrete assignments according to the need of the hour. Their task was to perform their spiritual ministry here or there, carrying forward the work, which Paul had started, and then reporting to him their findings and accomplishments. While these Epistles are no "manual" of pastoral theology, per se (let alone biblical or systematic theology), they are nevertheless rich in theology and furnish worth-while and timeless theological direction for the Church's thought leaders, whoever they might be. Only a narrow perspective of theology, or of "doing"

the process we catch a glimpse of how such theological realities impact the nature, message, and mission of the Church.[7] Looking over Paul's shoulders as he engages Timothy, we see some of what both the tangible and intangible duties and responsibilities of the Seventh-day Adventist theologian entail.[8]

It should be noted that Paul's thoughts to Timothy (as with other New Testament writers) reflects somewhat of an apologetic tone. He is assertive and defining, unequivocating and direct. We should not be embarrassed or ashamed of a similar posture, or retreat from it. Yet, like Paul we must avoid being negatively critical. Rather, we must be proactive, articulating positive things. When Paul writes apologetically he is not writing against someone or attacking ideas, per se. He is not putting anyone down (although he does drop some names, identify theological trends, and describe the kind of teachers whose motives and integrity can be legitimately questioned, cf. 2 Tim. 3:1-13). He simply understands human nature. He knows how the average church member living in a real world with a real body and with real pressure from their contemporary culture, thinks, struggles, reacts. Paul has a realistic grasp of how things can and will go morally and spiritually in individual lives and in the life of the Church if specific moral and spiritual matters are not related to with candor and clarity. In effect, Paul models how the theologian must be assertive, positive, defining—because of human nature and weakness, and because of the power of contemporary culture to encapsulate human beings into its worldview and life.[9]

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theology, would deny either such theological richness of Paul's words to Timothy and Titus, his theological mentorship of them, or their role as theologians in training. Paul's theology becomes evident in the context of his gospel proclamation and leadership and in a sense rises to clarity within the exigencies at hand. See Jon Dybdahl, "Doing Theology in Mission: Part I," *Ministry*, (November 2005): 19. See also, Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsty Press, 1971), 584; William Hendriksen, *Thessalonians, Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 4; Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 3; Michael Moss, *1, 2 Timothy & Titus* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1994), 11, 12.

[7] As Mounce observes, "More than perhaps any book in the NT, exegesis of the PE [Pastoral Epistles] is affected by ones critical assumptions" (Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, xivi.). Such is true not only regarding Pauline authorship, but with the theological value of Paul's communication to young ministers, to second generation believers in Ephesus, and to a young church facing a pagan world in Crete.

[8] See discussion below under stewardship, pp. 7-8.

[9] Throughout Scripture we have a blend of building up and warning against, i.e., the Revelation's Three Angel's Messages where there is the gospel call followed by candid warning followed again by incredible promise (Rev. 14:6-13).

Can we build up without warning? The theologian must critique and warn as well as build up. But theological critique or warning must never undermine biblical faith or put others down (even one's theological enemies). We must not theologize against, but for—for God in all His matchless glory, character, faithfulness, love and grace, and for the truth of the gospel in all its wonder, beauty, hope inspiring and heart freeing reality. People are not to be driven from error but drawn to the truth in all its beauty. The theologian's work is that of building up even when it is compelled to be critical. It is to be constructive. Creative. Positive. Defining.[10] And yet, as with Paul in the early Church, it will always take place in an uneasy context.

Calvin compares the work of God among his ancient people with the theological challenges of his own day: "God still wishes in these days to build his spiritual temple amidst the anxieties of the times. The faithful must still hold the trowel in one hand and the sword in the other, because the building of the church must still be combined with many struggles."[11]

It is not difficult to sense that the day of itching ears, of which Paul informs Timothy, is upon us even now. No other passage of Scripture describes more accurately the day in which we live. If this is so, like Paul and Timothy, the Seventh-day Adventist theologian works within the context of the anxieties of our eschatological times and the struggle for minds and hearts in the Great Controversy. It is from this perspective that the duties and responsibilities of the Seventh-day Adventist theologian are set and ultimately defined. It is a perspective that reminds us that the theologian works within an uneasy context. There is need for the theological enterprise and faith-affirming theology.

II. Stewardship

When Paul exhorts the young theologian, Timothy, in regard to his duties and responsibilities, such duties and responsibilities are envisioned as "stewardship." Timothy is to guard (φύλαξον –keep safe, protect, defend) what has been entrusted to his care (1 Tim. 6:20). There is a "pattern" (ὑποτύπωσιν –pattern, model, example, outline) of sound words and teaching (theology) which Timothy had received from his theological mentor (Paul)—a pattern from God's Word and the things He

[10] See Louis Berkoff, *Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 58, 59; Hughes. "The Creative Task of Theology,"), 9-25.

[11] In his Commentary on Daniel 9:25.

has revealed in His Word about Himself, our human condition, salvation, how we are to live, last things, etc. (2 Tim. 1:13, 14).

Elsewhere Paul asserts that the Church's thought leaders are "servants of Christ and stewards [οἰκονόμους] of the mysteries of God, and that it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy" and might I add, faithful (1 Cor. 4:1, 2). Overseers are "stewards of God" (Tit. 1:7). Paul envisions such stewardship to be practically expressed in things like preaching the Word, being ready in season and out of season, reproving, rebuking, exhorting with great patience and instruction, enduring hardship, doing the work of an evangelist, fulfilling the ministry we have been called to perform (2 Tim. 4:2, 5). All this is in the context of the challenges to individual and corporate life and faith.

More specifically, in Paul's thinking, the church is steward of the Word of God[12]—steward of the truth: "but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). The Church is the repository of the oracles of God (Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12). Ultimately, the theologian's stewardship is the stewardship of biblical truth! It is important here to note that this does not mean that either the church or its theologian "has" the truth. The Church doesn't have the truth. Truth does not belong to the Church. Truth is revealed by the One who is the Truth.[13] Thus, the Church is a receiver and conduit. But it is also constituted by truth, changed by it, and holds it in sacred trust to where that very truth flows on from it to the world. The Church is granted the privilege of seeing truth (or parts of it, at least), understanding it, being transformed by it, proclaiming it, teaching it, being possessed by it. Truth is based on Scripture as Paul asserts (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; cf. 4:2-4; Jn. 17:17). The Church is the pillar and ground of truth when it stewards the truth, which God has entrusted to it. This is the nature and mission of the Church! And so with the Adventist theologian.

As a theologian, Timothy was to hold fast the pattern of right teaching and guard carefully what has been entrusted to him (2 Tim. 1:13-14). Evidently, something has been entrusted to the Church, to us.

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[12] Charles E. Bradford, *Timothy & Titus* (ed. George R. Knight; Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1994), 144.

[13] Arthur F. Holmes, *All Truth Is God's Truth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 32-38; Paul Tillich, "What Is Truth," *Canadian Journal of Theology*, 1, no. 2 (1955): 117-122.

We have been given a pattern of truth. A pattern of sound teaching. A gospel DNA so to speak. The idea of truth or a "pattern" of doctrine means that the theologian is dealing with ideas—ideas and words that are concrete, objective, propositional.[14] Truth as ideas or words can be spoken, heard, written down, read, and kept. It is everywhere assumed in Scripture that these words and ideas of truth carry understandable form, content, and most important, meaning. There is a correspondence of ideas, which words convey to the realities they represent. True words can be relied on because they accord with reality. These true words encompass right action (ethically correct behavior) as well as correct knowledge.

These Epistles to Timothy (as well as Titus) are important because of the wealth of information they contain concerning theology and the theologian's work in terms of practical matters of Church life and organization—its nature, mission, and unity. Timothy was to know and articulate "how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God" (1 Tim. 3:15). The conduct Paul envisions includes public worship, the selection and qualifications of church leaders, the pastor's personal life and public ministry, how one confronts sin in the church, the role of women, the care of widows, and how to handle money. There are also important doctrinal truths about Scripture, salvation, and Christ. In I Timothy, Paul gives instruction concerning false doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3-20), instructions concerning life within the Church (1 Tim. 2:1-3:16), instructions concerning false teachers (1 Tim. 4:1-16), instructions concerning pastoral responsibilities (5:1-6:2), instructions concerning the man of God (6:3-21). These all fall under the umbrella of the theologian's stewardship.

Corresponding to these earlier themes, 2 Timothy outlines elements of a strong spiritual life, the dangers of false teaching, standing against apostasy, the centrality and work of Scripture, faithful preaching, and faithful evangelistic ministry. The core message of 2 Timothy is "guarding the gospel"[15]— which, in the context of Paul's thinking, has to do with "truth". Again, these very practical perspectives fall under the umbrella of the theologian's stewardship.

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[14] We need to be careful in defining "propositional." Here we understand that it means biblical revelation has cognitive content, that it informs us about revelatory events and their meaning. See Holmes, *All Truth Is God's Truth*, 74.

[15] Stott, *Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy*, 21.

Theology then, is the fundamental framework and impulse for such praxis. There is no competition between theology and praxis. Theology anticipates praxis and praxis demands theological grounding and direction. As such, praxis is often the occasion in which theology is consciously worked out, expressed and clarified in terms of implications for life's exigencies and culture's context.[16]

Such theology presupposes the teaching Church. It presupposes the teaching, which is always going on within the Church. It is a teaching that defines "true" doctrine, life, and practice. It bases and examines the doctrinal content of what is being taught within the Church.[17] "Theology is a function of the Church."[18] Theology is the task of criticizing (in a constructive way) and revising the Church's language about God.[19] That does not mean, however, that the theological enterprise changes the Church's teaching about God, or the Word of God. But it does mean that there can be no theology without the Church. Theology is done in the framework of the Church. The theologian himself/herself is part of the Church.

More specifically, the theologian "is always the theologian of a particular church. He receives the truth in her communion, shares her convictions, and promises to teach and propagate her values as long as they do not prove to be contrary to the Word of God."[20] These teachings constitute a "bias" and this is perfectly acceptable. No one ever does theology without any presuppositions. Every theologian entering upon their theological task has certain convictions which he or she cannot set aside at will, because one cannot eliminate one's self. [21]

This is assumed of the Seventh-day Adventist theologian—that they are possessed by the DNA of biblical Adventism and work within its organizing reality. Theology must be done against Seventh-day Adventist distinctives[22] and their corresponding confessional context.

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[16] See Jon Dybdahl, "Doing Theology in Mission: Part II," *Ministry*, (January 2006): 19-22; Dybdahl, "Doing Theology in Mission: Part I," 19-22.

[17] Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God: Dogmatics Vol. I* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1949), 80.

[18] Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God: Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics, being Vol. i, Part I* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), 1.

[19] Ibid., 2.

[20] Berkoff, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 64.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Adventist distinctives comprises the understanding of the Adventist community as a prophetic movement fulfilling the specifications of the end-time remnant identified in the book of Revelation (Revelation, chapters 12-14). The moral imagery of an eschatological

Furthermore, this stewardship means that mission and theology go together. True theology should move the church to mission.[23] It is with this in mind that Paul exhorts the young theologian Timothy to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5). Theology must give birth to (as well as arise out of) and serve the goal of the Church's mission and work in the world. [24] Furthermore, it must facilitate that mission. The theologian must envision himself/herself as an evangelist with persuasive purposes if they are to feed the Church's mission.

As Miroslav Kiš notes, as a "pillar and bulwark of truth" (1 Tim 3:5) the Church has the right to expect all those who hold leading position or who teach in her name to do everything in their power to defend her teachings (2 Tim 4:1-5). As a body of Christ (Col 1:18), the church has the right to expect that every member, especially its thought leaders, will remain united and loyal to her call, her message and her mission.[25] As a steward of God's truth, the church has the right to decide who can be her spokesperson, and teach in her name (2 Titus 1:10, 11). "If a brother is teaching error, those who are in responsible positions ought to know it; and if he is teaching truth, they ought to take their stand at his side. We should all know what is taught among us; for it is truth, we need it. We are all under obligation to God to know what He sends us."[26] The Church reserves the right to watch with diligence over interpretation, teaching, and preaching of that Word, lest strange world views, and

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people maintaining a rhythm of obedience (Rev. 12:17; 14:12), holding to a prophetic/apocalyptic worldview and the life it articulates, i.e., the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 12:17), who are personally undefiled and blameless (Rev. 14:3-5), and who proclaim the everlasting gospel (Rev. 14:6-13), highlights personal faithfulness in keeping with theological truth. Such implied moral excellence (both in relation to theology and lifestyle) is not cultural in that the theologian is merely part of a particular church whose values she is obligated to uphold. Rather it authentic in that Adventist DNA literally possesses them in the totality of their commitment to following the Lamb wherever He goes (Rev. 14:4).

[23] Dybdahl, "Doing Theology in Mission: Part I," 19.

[24] Dybdahl, "Doing Theology in Mission: Part II," 22.

[25] Miroslav Kiš, "A Seventh-day Adventist View of Ethical Issues in Dissent," (Denver Faith & Science Conference, August, 2004), 3. This unpublished manuscript was presented at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists sponsored "Faith and Science Conference" held in Denver, CO in August, 2004.

[26] Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1915, 2002), 300, 301.

private agendas, influence the minds of its ministry and, through it, its students and members (Titus 2:7, 8).[27]

For the church to steward the truth it has been entrusted with, it needs theologians who faithfully steward that very trust. As the essence of life is not ownership but stewardship—the faithful management of all that God entrusts to us[28]—so the theologian's duties and responsibilities are one of stewardship. She is to faithfully manage (interpreting, teaching, guarding, proclaiming, etc.) the biblical truths God entrusts to His Church. Stewardship has to do with the theologian's vision and influence, her commitment and mind. There is more here than mere articles of faith. Stewardship has to do with shared vision, with heart, attitude, and spirit.

Fundamentally, the duties and responsibilities of the Seventh-day Adventist theologian are faith-affirming, constructive, and on the cutting edge. The Adventist theologian is a steward of truth and a resource for the Church. The Adventist theologian probes the deep things of God for the benefit of leadership, pastors, and church members, and to assure there is only one theology in the Church.[29] The theology of the leaders, pastors, and parishioners should be the same as that of the seminary scholars and theologians.[30] The Adventist theologian's duties and responsibilities enables such unity of vision, faith, and life.[31]

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[27] The corollary to this is that the Adventist theologian's own inner self resonates with the stated aims and values of the Church and is responsible for one's own influence, teachability, conscience, and continued employment in matters of dissent.

[28] Dave Sutherland and Kirk Nowery, *The 33 Laws of Stewardship* (Camarillo, CA: Spire Resources, Inc, 2003), 10.

[29] In asserting that the duties and responsibilities of the Adventist theologian include assuring there be "only one theology in the church," I am suggesting neither a blind Adventist orthodoxy nor the loss of academic freedom. Nor am I overlooking the profound diversity of theological reflection our world work demands in terms of contextualizing our message and mission to given cultures. But I am suggesting that the Church's nature, mission and message possess a profound unity that eschews any notion of pluralism. Like a photograph of a given object can be either monochrome or in full color, it is still the same reality. The cultural diversity of both the Church's need (and questions) and the thinking of its theologians can bring incredible color and richness and at the same time exhibit profound unity of purpose and direction.

[30] Fernando Canale, *Basic Elements of Christian Theology: Scripture Replacing Tradition* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Lithotech, 2005), 6.

[31] This suggests a profound community among Adventist theologians who mirror for the Church diligence to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace where there is "one body and one Spirit . . . one hope . . . [of the church's calling], one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all"(Eph. 4:3-6). Such community is nurtured by a conscious understanding of the Trinity whose

III. Biblical Focus

Ultimately the theologian's use of the Word of God is integral to his/her stewarding truth on behalf of the Church. Paul's assertions regarding the inspiration and practical nature of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:14-18) serve as an interpretive hinge between his two assertions regarding the moral/spiritual dysfunction and theological needs which the Church will face (2 Tim. 3:1-13 and 4:1-8). Like an Oreo cookie of white cream between two chocolate wafers, verses 3:14-18 about the inspiration and authority of Scripture place verses 3:1-13 and verses 4:1-8 about moral/spiritual dysfunction and theological needs in context and vice versus. Here Paul's language is both fluid and informative. Scripture (3:16), what is taught (3:16; 4:2), the Word (4:2), sound teaching (4:3), and truth (4:4) are nearly synonymous. Scripture, Word, and truth are linked (cf. 2:15). What is taught (doctrine, theology) flows from this matrix if it is to be sound. For Paul, theology is biblical teaching, and biblical teaching includes applying Scripture to life. Scripture is the Word that is to be preached, and the truth that is to be articulated flows from the inspired writings. This biblical focus is what causes itching ears and the desire for accommodating theology which Paul asserts is inevitable. There will be individuals unable to endure (put up with) sound biblical teaching and who yearn for an easier theology. They will be inclined to turn aside to mere human constructions reflecting their own values (4:3,4). Whenever the Word is applied, it demands response and decision, and this calls for radical change.[32] People of Paul's day as well as contemporary man wants to be set free from the doctrinal and ethical absolutes of Scripture. Theological trends in our modern age are attributable to the increasing extent to which it is becoming infected with the same quest to be free and the arrogance of human self-sufficiency.[33]

In Paul's understanding, doctrine (theology, what was taught and preached) was drawn from the Word of truth (Scripture). In outlining concrete doctrine he was simply theologically integrating and assuming the basic elements or principles of Scripture.[34] Theology thus integrates

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community they reflect (Jn. 17) as well as a mutual humility and submission between themselves and before the Church's nature, message, and mission in light of the revealed Word of God. It also means a "coming into line" (Ellen G. White, *GCB*, March 30, 1903, par. 43; *RH*, Feb 16, 1905; *Letter* 32a, 1908).

[32] Bradford, *Timothy & Titus*, 145.

[33] Hughes, "The Creative Task of Theology," 22.

[34] Canale, *Basic Elements of Christian Theology: Scripture Replacing Tradition*, 7.

Scripture. It brings together the kaleidoscope of scriptural statements on any subject, and allows us to see their common pattern. It identifies the great unifying themes underlying biblical passages, and shows how any particular passage illustrates such a theme. To be a theologian is not to dispense with Scripture, but to become so immersed in it that its common themes and patterns begin to emerge.[35] This is what Paul envisions for the young theologian Timothy when he speaks of "rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). A clear path of truth from the "word of truth" (Scripture) is to be articulated in correctly following and teaching God's message. Like a laser focusing light toward some specified purpose (rather than mere dispersion of a floodlight), the theologian focuses Scripture's meaning so that it penetrates or pinpoints or illumines or guides or cuts.

Adventism uncompromisingly takes the principles of *sola scriptura* and *prima sciptura* to its logical conclusion. No tradition, no creed, no belief is recognized unless supported by a clear "thus saith the Lord". However, another method continually challenges our posture. Rather than *sola scriptura*, there is the press to bring together Scripture, science, reason, and experience (otherwise known as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral) in a way that these four entities each have equal ground in determining reality. In effect, four equal votes. *Sola scriptura*, of course, does not discount either reason, experience, or science. They each have an important and authoritative voice. However, *sola scriptura* demands that the Bible becomes the hermeneutic—the lens—for determining data from every other source.

As Canale asserts, the Seventh-day Adventist theologian's "commitment to the *sola-tota scriptura* principle requires a departure from the traditional multiple sources of theological matrix and the hermeneutical guide drawn from philosophical and scientific ontologies."[36]This is a critique that Evangelical scholars themselves are beginning to sound. Ben Witherington's *The Problem With Evangelical Theology: Testing Exegetical Foundations of Calvinism,*

[35] Alistere McGrath, *A Cloud of Witnessess: Ten Great Christian Thinkers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 9.

[36] Fernando Canale, "From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Biblical and Systematic Theologies—Part II," *Journal of the Adventist Theologial Society*, 16, no. 1-2 (2005): 141.

Dispensationalism and Wesleyanism[37] examines the exegetical foundations and theological structures of three streams of evangelicalism (Reformed, Wesleyan, and Dispensationalist views) and suggests that in what passes as theology in the Church's proclamation are not just glaring weaknesses but real problems of exegesis. He suggests that Evangelicalism has lost touch with its Reformation principles of *sola scriptura* and *prima scriptura* and in particular with its necessary rigorous attention to details of the Bible and the need to stick to the text. "The problem with Evangelical theology at this juncture," Witherington asserts, "is that it is not nearly biblical enough."[38] Here we find the major reformers still dependent on the philosophical foundations of earlier theologians.

Canale registers a similar, however clearer critique, not just toward Evangelical theology, but towards Seventh-day Adventist theology as well.[39] Is it possible that one of the problems with Adventist theology at this juncture in our history is that it is not nearly biblical enough? That we have lost our biblical focus? That Scripture no longer haunts our imagination and is the well from which we drink? That we are busy reading so much theology, even doing exegesis, that we no longer really read Scripture any more? Every Seventh-day Adventist theologian must ask himself/herself this question. "Am I really biblically focused in my work? When all is said and done, do my projects lead to the Word and are they built solidly on the Word? Am I biblical enough?"

Only Scripture has the necessary information to produce Christian theology.[40] More pointedly, only Scripture has the necessary information to produce Seventh-day Adventist theology. "The basic elements of Christian theology [and I would add Seventh-day Adventist theology]," Canale asserts, "are biblical elements, not philosophical teachings introduced later via church tradition."[41] All theologians work their

[37] Ben Witherington, *The Problem With Evangelical Theology: Testing Exegetical Foundations of Calvinism, Dispensationalism and Wesleyanism* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005).

[38] Ibid., xi.

[39] Canale, *Basic Elements of Christian Theology: Scripture Replacing Tradition*; Canale, "From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Biblical and Systematic Theologies—Part II," 114-142; Fernando Canale, "The Quest for the Biblical Ontological Ground of Christian Theology," *Journal of the Adventist Theologial Society*, 16, no. 1-2 (2005): 1-20.

[40] Canale, *Basic Elements of Christian Theology: Scripture Replacing Tradition*, 17.

[41] Ibid., 7.

reflections using a methodology and presuppositions. The source of theological knowledge is the basic grounding issue on which theological methodology stands.[42] There is need not only of the *sola Scriptura* principle but the *prima Scriptura* principle whereby the Adventist theologian gives hermeneutical and interpretive priority to the truth of Scripture over the truths we derive through philosophical and scientific methodologies. Moreover, we criticize and understand the latter in light of the former.[43] This is a fundamental part of the Adventist theologian's "rightly handling the Word of truth."

The ongoing exegesis/theology debate naturally comes into view here. Increasingly more Seventh-day Adventist theology and thinking is being both questioned and stifled today in the name of exegesis. On the other hand, so much of Adventist theology and thinking is assumed as biblical and no longer in need of closer biblical examination or further development, corrective balance or change. In some arenas careful biblical exegesis no longer takes place. Some of us are like the fly crawling on the Sistine Chapel while others are the tourists looking up from thirty-feet below. We are either too narrow in our perspective (exegesis) or dizzied by our trying to take in the whole (theology). Either way Scripture becomes distorted or fragmented, unwittingly robbed of its voice, depth, and breadth. What we need is exegesis that informs theology and theology that guides exegesis. The Seventh-day Adventist theologian will recognize the strengths and limitations of exegetical methodology, biblical theological method, and systematic theological method, and work to coordinate these respective resources in their proper priority and balance.

Ultimately, theology is biblically measured and so must be the theologian. While studying for my Ph.D. comprehensives I was preparing for questions regarding historical theology. While tracing theology's fortunes during Christian history, I was struck with the reality of so much theology and approaches to theology that literally distorted Scripture. So many sincere theologians have come and gone (giants like Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wesley) honestly wrestling with the biblical message, but unwittingly distorting it through their own bias, culture, and anxieties of the times. Somewhere in that journey towards my comps, I came to the realization that everyone of us have the capacity to distort Scripture—including myself. I find the thought terribly humbling: *I have*

[42] Ibid., 14.
[43] Ibid., 18.

the capacity to twist Scripture to my taste. I also have the capacity to hang on to my distorted views when challenged by my colleagues, or the Church's Message or Mission, Protology or Eschatology, Christology or Ecclessiology, whatever, or even by the plain teachings of Scripture itself.

It makes me wonder about doing theology, and anything new and creative, or deeper and richer, that I might find in the process. Will I become more excited about my own ideas than about God's Word and what in fact it really reveals? I may have a great idea, but if it is not biblical, it is not great at all. Furthermore, I would assert that if I am immersed in Scripture, any ideas I draw from it are really never my own as if I can copyright them and claim credit. If I ever consider theological projects as my own, apart from Scripture or the mission and message of the Church, I unwittingly detach myself from the humble role of a servant the steward of Scripture and position myself as authoritative.

Paul's thoughts on theological understanding and the theologian's ability to adequately articulate theology is instructive: "we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words" (1 Cor. 2:13 NIV). Paul would remind us that understanding spiritual things (what's in God's mind and why He does what He does) is dependent on the Holy Spirit's work on the theologian's mind. Likewise the ability to put those spiritual things into proper words (theology)—living words, practical words, picturesque words, words that grab attention and which at the same time present deep eternal truth (Eccl. 12:10)—is dependent on the same Spirit. Scripture belongs to the Holy Spirit not the theologian.[44] The phenomenon of Holy Scripture is a *mystery*.[45]

On one's own the theologian is unable to connect with the deep spiritual things of God. On one's own the theologian is unable to put the deep spiritual things which she might discover in their work into words that not only inform, correct, or exhort, but inspire spiritual response. Paul assures us that the mind of Christ can be known, plumbed, and mirrored (1 Cor. 2:16). The Adventist theologian needs the Spirit to grasp spiritual themes and to find the right words to articulate those spiritual truths. This calls for humility before God and His Word. It means understanding one's bias, one's limitations, one's spiritual journey, and one's capacity to twist Scripture to their own taste. It calls

[44] Hughes, "The Creative Task of Theology," 16.
[45] Ibid., 15.

for the workings of the Holy Spirit in our mind and heart. When this happens our words (theology) will be received not as the words of human beings, but for what it really is, the Word of God, which will powerfully work in those who chose to believe (1 Thess. 2:13). Such is demanded by a generation not so sure anymore whether they are following mere Seventh-day Adventist culture and traditions and who yearn for foundations and certainty beyond just another institutionalized religion.

The Seventh-day Adventist theologian is thus biblically focused, biblically measured. He gives hermeneutical and interpretive priority to the truth of Scripture over the truths arrived through philosophical and scientific methodologies. She understands that her authority and power and as well as that of the Church in the world lies in the Word of God. The Church has no authority or transforming power of her own. When her theologians both understand and model this reality, she will remain biblically focused and biblically measured, both as a corporate community and individual Christians.

IV. Character

The making of theology is closely related to the making of a theologian. The theologian makes the theology. The man—the whole man or woman—lies behind the theology. It is the outflow of a life. The man makes the theologian. Theology deepens and grows spiritually and biblically because the theologian grows and deepens spiritually and biblically. The theology is holy because the theologian is holy. The theology is full of divine anointing because the theologian is full of the divine anointing.

Paul makes this moral/spiritual link between the person of the theologian and the heart of theology when he writes to the young theologian Timothy: "You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness" (2 Tim. 3:10 ESV). In other words, "You know what I teach, Timothy, and how I live, and what my purpose in life is" (NLT). And again, "as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it" (2 Tim. 3:14). You can trust the theology (what you have learned) because you know the source. Paul asserts that he and those working with him were on a higher moral and spiritual level–godly—than the evil impostors who not only deceive, but have themselves become deceived (2 Tim. 3:12, 13). The implication is that because of that, their theology (teaching) is likewise

on a higher moral and spiritual level. This moral/spiritual link between theologian and theology, which Paul envisions, includes Paul himself, those working with him, many witnesses, and "faithful men" who will be able to adequately teach others as Timothy extends the stewardship of the gospel to them (2 Tim. 2:2). Even more directly Paul exhorts the young theologian, "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim. 4:16). Watch your life and your theology, Paul urges.

Life and theology go hand in hand. Again, the theologian makes the theology. The character of the heart determines the character of the theologian's theology. Dead theologians teach dead theology, and dead theology (even if it is right theology, orthodox theology) kills. But living theologians bring life. Their theology resonates with the soul and the spiritual realities of God. Hurting theologians create a comforting theology. Offended theologians engender defensive theology. Sidelined theologians articulate independent theology. These are generalizations for sure, yet there is more truth to these assertions than not. This is the *being* and *doing* that must be kept in balance. Not only is there the *being* of the Church in relation to its going (doing of mission), but a being of the theologian in relation to theological work. Devotion qualifies the theologian's duty in immeasurable ways.

Furthermore, theologians are not mere theology makers but men-makers, theologian-makers, pastor-makers, and saint-makers. The soul of the theologian leaves its fingerprints on the soul of the Church, the soul of individuals within the church (2 Tim. 2:2; 3:10, 14). Who the theologian is in her character and spiritual life influences who the Church sees herself to be in her character and spiritual life. Who the theologian is in his character and spiritual life influences any theologian they may be working alongside of and those they are mentoring as future thought leaders in the Church. This is how the theologian's character and spiritual life effectively touches the Church's nature, mission, and unity.

Just as there is a moral frame of reference on the part of those with "itching ears" who are no longer able to endure sound doctrine because their values and passions draw them in another direction, there is a corresponding moral frame of reference on the part of the theologian who would preach the Word, and be ready in every season to reprove and rebuke and exhort with great patience and careful instruction (3:1-9; 4:2-4).

Life and theology always go together both on the part of the theologian and the hearer (the Church). The theologian' s moral/spiritual life affects the spiritual/moral power as well as accuracy of the theology. The Church member's moral/spiritual life determines the spiritual/moral quality of theology they can either tolerate or desire. No wonder they don't want to hear sound doctrine. The unconverted heart prefers senseless myths rather than solid truth. I don't want to hear about my attitude or my habits or my values. I want to do what I want to do. "The prophets prophesy falsely . . . and my people love to have it so," says Jeremiah (Jer. 5:31). How can the theologian rebuke or reprove or correct or exhort or lift to a higher standard if their own hearts are polluted?

There is a link between ethics and doctrine. The true nature, mission, and unity of the Church calls for moral/spiritual excellence on the part of its theologians, because such moral/spiritual excellence is at the very heart of her nature, mission, and unity, and her theologians must both work and speak from that heart. As the Church is holy, so must her theologians be, otherwise their work and influence will unwittingly undermine (1 Thess. 2:10-13).

In speaking of the challenge of leadership formation, Clouzet suggests that theological training has "overlooked the inner person of the would-be parson."[46] He outlines the ascetic, scholastic, encyclopedic, mentoring, and professional paradigms for ministerial training and posits how each has fallen short in nurturing moral and spiritual formation of seminary students. Studies Clouzet cites show that the preponderance of what is considered valuable for the pastor's effectiveness in ministry are not, in fact, ministry skills, or leadership skills, but character values. This accounts for the lack of power in spiritual leadership and the inability to influence a world careening to self-destruction.[47] The challenge of leadership formation has to do with whether seminary students can see God in their mentors, teachers, and administrators—together with spiritual passion, integrity, and Holy Spirit power.[48] The challenge of theological leadership is likewise moral and spiritual formation of the inner person to where there is not only facility

[46] Ron E. M. Clouzet, "The Challenge of Leadership Formation," *Perspective Digest*, 11, no. 1 (2006): 29.

[47] Ibid., 32, 33.

[48] Ibid., 36.

with divine truth, but close communion with God and the living presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

In his book *Power Through Prayer*, E. M. Bounds writes that "Men are God's method. The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men. . . . . What the church needs today is not more or better machinery, not new organizations or more and novel methods. She needs men whom the Holy Spirit can use—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come upon machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men—men of prayer."[49]

The same is true for theology. The Church is looking for better theologians. God is looking for better men and women. What the Church needs today is not better theology, nor a new theology, a theology to meet the times or culture, or more and novel theological methods. She needs men and women whom the Holy Spirit can use. Men and women of character and spiritual depth. The Holy Spirit does not flow through theology or theological systems, but through men and women. The Holy Spirit does not anoint theology, He anoints men and women so the theology is biblical, spiritual, empowered. God needs theologians who will live holy lives.

P. T. Forsyth notes that the theologian "should first not be a philosopher but a saved man, with eternal life working in him."[50] Philip Hughes asserts that "The creative task of theology is, first of all, the task of the redeemed who, through the prior grace of God, have returned to the Father by the Son, and though the inner workings of the Holy Spirit *have been put in tune with the mind of Christ*."[51]

Theology that kills is often orthodox. Nothing is so dead as a dead orthodoxy. Theology can engross, harden, and estrange the heart from God by the neglect of personal moral and spiritual discipline. The theologian may lose God in his theology. Thus the theologian must keep his spirit in harmony with the divine nature of his high calling. Only the heart can learn to do theology. So we must do the work of the heart. The theologian is to be a praying man, a praying woman. Theology is made in the closet. The theologian is made in closet. The theologian's study must become a closet, an altar, a ladder, so that every thought might ascend heavenward before it goes toward the written page,

[49] E. M. Bounds, *Power Through Prayer* (Whitaker House, 1982), 8, 9.
[50] Peter Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and Modern Mind* (London, 1907), 13, 305.
[51] Hughes, "The Creative Task of Theology," 25. Italics mine.

classroom, or Church. God commits the keys of His kingdom to the theologian who understands that her own spiritual moral growth is her main business. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

Why is this so important and fundamental to the theologian's duties and responsibilities? Because of the deep spirituality of the theologian's work and because the nature and mission and unity of the Church demands it. And if we would move our generation for God, we must rise to a new level of "theology making" by a new level of "theologian making." I would add as prayer makes the man or the woman, prayer makes the theologian. Prayer makes the theology (as Paul exhorts Timothy and models prayer in his own life, cf., 1 Tim. 2:1, 2, 8; 2 Tim. 1:3) . Every theologian who does not make prayer a mighty factor in his own life and teaching and writing is weak as a factor in God's work. She is powerless to advance God's cause in this world. All our libraries and studies are mere emptiness compared with our closets.

True theology is God-touched, God-enabled, and God-made. The theology may be true, but even divine truth has no life-giving energy alone. It must be empowered by the Holy Spirit. If the inner man has never broken down and surrendered to God and His word, His inner life will not be a great highway for the transmission of God's message, God's power. He will be a spiritual nonconductor. This brings us again to the reality that the theologian's ability to adequately articulate theology is Holy Spirit dependent and thus a spiritual phenomenon: "we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words" (1 Cor. 2:13 NIV).

The Adventist theologian understands how her own moral spiritual person impacts one's theological enterprise and the power of her theological influence to truly spiritually transform lives. Again, the theologian makes the theology, dead theologians produce and/or teach dead theology, living theologians are God-touched, God-enabled, God-made and produce true and living theology. Living theologians are spiritually tuned to the mind of Christ. They are self surrendered to the Word of God. Their personal life is in harmony with moral vision of Scripture. They are constantly nourished on the words of faith and the sound doctrine (1 Tim. 4:16). They are growing intellectually, spiritually, and on the issues that matter to the Church. They are patterning themselves after faithful and godly theologians. These are the

duties and responsibilities of the Adventist theologian in light of the nature and message and mission of the Church.

V. Worldview

Early in my ministry I was listening to a colleague who had just finished his advanced degree. We were at a pastor's worker's meeting in one of our Conferences, and he was the main speaker for the three days the pastors of our field were together. I vividly remember listening to my colleague's presentations and something deep down inside me saying—"He's no longer a Seventh-day Adventist in his thinking." Here was someone I looked up to. Respected. Loved. He was far more gifted and articulate than myself., a charismatic, thought provoking speaker. Now suddenly I was struggling with how what he was saying rang both with my grasp of the topic under discussion and my understanding of Seventh-day Adventist identity and thinking. "Who am I," I thought to myself, "to question my brother's theology and Adventist focus." There was no question about sincerity, or honesty of purpose, but vision and orientation.

Because we were friends, I pulled him aside during a couple of the breaks and engaged him on some exegetical and theological points from the Scripture he was expounding. While his answers seemed good, there was something about them that didn't seem quite right. I hadn't had all the privileges of advanced studies at the time, so I couldn't quite figure it out just then and clarify exactly where and why things felt amiss. It was at that worker's meeting where most of my pastor colleagues were drinking in the latest theological trend of apocalyptic interpretation, that I quietly bowed my heart and said, "Lord, something's not right here, or perhaps it's me. Am I missing something? And . . . if you ever give me an opportunity for advanced study, I will use it in faith-affirming service."

Fifteen years later I received my Ph.D. That very spring, in fact a month or so before my graduation, my esteemed colleague was released from ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church taking most of his congregation with him and leaving a trail of confusion, sorrow, and bitterness. The day I graduated, I sat in my car holding my doctoral diploma in hand thinking back 15 years when it all began. "I knew he was no longer an Adventist in his thinking way back then," I said to myself. "And it has taken 15 years for it to become so painfully plain to others. Why did it take so long? Didn't others see? Why could I see so

quickly, even before my Ph.D., and so many take so long to see and respond?"

In his book, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*,[52] Malcolm Gladwell speaks of how individuals are able to intuit things long before others even have a clue. How a little bit of the right knowledge can go a long way. How decisions made very quickly can be every bit as good as those made cautiously and deliberately. How some snap perceptions and resulting decisions may even be the best.

Gladwell writes how our snap judgments and first impressions can be educated and controlled, and how we should take our instincts seriously and learn how to use them correctly. There is as much value in the blink of an eye as in months of rational analysis. Gladwell calls this intuitive skill "thin slicing." "Thin slicing" is the ability of our unconscious to find patterns in situations and behavior based on narrow slices of experience. It is rapid-cognition that allows one to zero in on what really matters. There is power in the glance, where one intuits the essence of something. Something one hears or sees, a tone of voice, something said or left unsaid, something done or not done.

Paul has the theologian's intuitive skills—"thin-slicing"—in mind when he tells Timothy to "be ready in season and out of season" in order to reprove, rebuke, exhort (2 Tim. 4:2). The theologian must read between the lines—at all times, everywhere, and anywhere.[53] The theologian's preparedness—"be ready"—is not merely in the sense of a preparedness to respond (i.e., that one is up on the theological issues or knows where to find things in the Bible or in their library), but preparedness in the sense of being able to actually recognize what's happening, where people are headed, what the issues are, where matters lead to their logical theological and experiential conclusion and what needs to be done—quickly before it's too late.

Our biggest challenge for "thin-slicing" as Seventh-day Adventist theologians is all the exposure we ourselves have to evangelical thinking and theology, non-Adventist seminaries, mega-church praxis, contemporary culture, and a host of Christian literature, some that is biblical and much that is socio-psychological in perspective. We are in

[52] Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2005).

[53] Paul gives example of this with reference to individuals who's folly in time will become obvious to all, but which he is now able to intuit (2 Tim. 3:6-9, 13). The reality of deceiving impostors who deceive gullible people implies those deceived were not able to thin-slice the issues or the impostors.

danger of losing our theological edge to intuit the impact on Seventh-day Adventist distinctives because some of those very distinctives have already become blurred in our thinking against the encapsulating power of these powerful realities. The Church needs for its theologians to see where things are headed. They need to know what the Church is actually doing. They must intuit the implications for the nature, message and mission of the Church if lifestyle, praxis, music, entertainment, worship, preaching, and theology continue in certain directions. God forbid that the itching ears in our midst find in us (the Seventh-day Adventist theologian) the very teachers in accordance to their own desires—however unwittingly on our part. Or that the myths they turn to are unwittingly facilitated by us—Adventist theologians. Nothing has greater potential for calling into question the nature, message and mission of the Church than the Church's theologians themselves.

Before we react too strongly to these assertions, we should be reminded that this theological intuition of which Paul writes, this "theological thin-slicing," takes place against the backdrop of history and the moral/spiritual trends in history within both the Christian and secular worlds. There is a worldview that frames Paul's theology and his theologian-making of Timothy. Paul tells Timothy that "the time will come" when "they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own ideas, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). He isn't speaking here of a general falling away—something every age experiences. Rather, this *kairos* (time) on the horizon is the apostasy within the Church itself of which Paul writes about more clearly in his letters to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2:3-4). There he speaks of the "mystery of iniquity" (KJV) in the context of the Church in history (2 Thess. 2:7). He refers to some sinister entity working behind the scenes that can be identified (intuited, "thin sliced") but which cannot be entirely described or explained or even believed by some as really there at all. It's a secret entity acting secretly, but which at some point in history will become visible, and when it does become visible it will still act disingenuously. It will be a known entity existing on two levels, one relatively open and benign, but serving to mask the true, hidden function. According to Paul, that evil force was already operating in a hidden way behind human activity and was determined to gain supremacy over the Church. Theologians and theology would alike be involved.

More specifically, Paul's reference to "the apostasy" in 2 Thessalonians 2 was no general apostasy. It was a direct link to the prophetic "little horn" power of apostasy we read about in Daniel 7.[54] The flow of Paul's ideas in 2 Thessalonians 2 follows those of Daniel 2 and 7 and also Christ's outline of last things in Matthew 24 (where Jesus too, refers back to the book of Daniel, see Matt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14). It is evident that Paul had been explaining biblical prophecy to the Thessalonians, patterning his thinking after both Daniel and Jesus in Matthew 24 (2 Thess. 2:6).

This was no new prophecy, no new development in the scheme of things. The knowledge of the sequence of events in Daniel 2 and 7 was essential to understanding Paul's thinking about a prolonged retardation of the emergence of the antichrist because of the existence of a restraining power—"And you know what is restraining him now" (2 Thess. 2:6). The apostolic church apparently had no question about the identity of this "restraining" power (2 Thess. 2:6). Given Daniel 2 and 7 and the words of Jesus in Matthew 24, believers knew that Rome would be the last major empire before the apostasy would break out in its fullness.[55]

Young Timothy undoubtedly heard Paul speak of these things many times. Like every Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic enterprise, these were the "traditions" that new believers were to hold on to (2 Thess. 2:15). When Paul encourages the Thessalonians to "hold to the traditions" (NASB), he seems to picture a gale, in which there is danger both of being swept off one's feet and of being wrenched from one's handhold. In face of this moral/spiritual hurricane force wind of apostasy, he urges them to stand their ground, planting their feet on terra firma, and to cling to something solid and secure, as if clutching for dear life. In the context of his thought, those "traditions" were the historical-prophetical understandings of the Book of Daniel. So, knowing what lay ahead and "thin-slicing" his way through the coming moral/spiritual confusion would be integral to Timothy's theological leadership.

Are you "thin-slicing" where I'm headed? Can you intuit the Adventist theologian's duties and responsibilities in these matters? His or her worldview? How it touches on the nature and mission and message of the Church? Paul is writing within a historical-prophetic

[54] Hans K. LaRondelle, *How To Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible: The Biblical-Contextual Approach* (Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997), 66.

[55] Ibid., 73.

context and understanding of reality. We refer to it as the great controversy between Christ and Satan, which has been waging through the great epochs of salvation history. Paul has all the moral spiritual issues (ethics and theology and spiritual life) that come into play within that historical-prophetic vision. Patrick Cranfield writes "There is need for the prophet-theologian who is a prophet in the biblical sense of the word—individuals who are perceptive to both the needs of the word and the voice of God, in order to proclaim and interpret present history.[56]

In the Book of Revelation we read how the Dragon is angry with an end-time people who exhibit both a rhythm of obedience and a prophetic impulse (Rev. 12:17; cf., 19:10). Revelation's vision of the saint's clash between the Dragon and a fallen world is a "prophetic conflict."[57] It is prophetic truth against prophetic delusion or the denial of the prophetic. Worldview is at the center of the controversy.

The Dragon is angry not merely because there is a prophet in the church (how we often narrowly interpret this Seventh-day Adventist identifying passage). He is angry because of what the prophet encourages the Church to accept Revelation (and from Daniel) about Jesus and the Great Controversy between Himself and Satan—and the moral spiritual issues at stake. He is angry because there will be theologians in the Church who choose to believe this apocalyptic prophecy and its defining worldview. He is angry that there will be theologians in the Church who understand how the everlasting Gospel is set in an apocalyptic historio-prophetic context, and how that unique setting of the Gospel brings understanding and urgency to a host of biblical truths and compels decision for Christ. He is angry because these theologians understand what such a worldview says about the nature and mission and message of the Church. He is angry because the Church follows the lead of her theologians and turns around and gives this testimony of Jesus to a confused and bewitched world. He is angry because his cover is blown, his game-plan revealed, his real motives exposed. The Dragon knows the power of apocalyptic prophecy where Jesus is fully unveiled and the Gospel unfolds against a Great Controversy backdrop taking place in real history and real time.

God's remnant people find their roots and message and mission in apocalyptic prophecy—Daniel and Revelation. And so will her

[56] Granfield, *Theologians at Work*, xx, xxi.

[57] Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (ed. James D. G. Dunn; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 120.

theologians. Revelation points toward a penetrating prophetic consciousness on the part of those whom the Dragon vents his anger. There is a driving prophetic worldview and impulse. The crisis of Seventh-day Adventist identity in contemporary times is closely linked to the loss of this prophetically defining theological vision. In this context, the Adventist theologian's duties and responsibilities take on profound and urgent significance. The Adventist theologian is propelled by a prophetic psyche that enables defining theological vision and nurtures a clear Adventist identity. That defining vision encompasses the DNA of Adventist identity, message, and mission: a vision drawn from the books of Daniel and Revelation, the everlasting gospel, judgment, Sabbath, sanctuary, nature of man, creation *ex nihilo*, obedience to God's covenant commandments, the prophetic gift, remnant identity, the historical-prophetic understanding of the great epochs of salvation history within the great controversy between Christ and Satan as well as the emergence of religious/moral/political apostasy within the Church itself. This is the defining worldview which enables the Seventh-day Adventist theologian to "thin slice" a host of practical matters including theology, fundamental beliefs, life-style, ethics, entertainment, music, worship, sexuality, mission and in doing so stay true to the Church's nature, message, and mission.

The theologian's students—pastors in training, young minds under formation—need to hear a certain and clear message in the classroom. Not questions without answers. Not doubts that lead individuals hanging. They need to see a modeling of their mentor's own journey and humility before the Word of God. In a time when it is easier to criticize than affirm because affirming means commitment and action, the Adventist theologian would both ask penetrating questions and give defining answers. Defining answers to critical questions of faith and life demand taking a position on such matters. As a stewards of the heavenly vision, their influence and commitments, the Seventh-day Adventist theologian will have purposefully taken such a personal position. They will identify with the truth articulated in those defining answers.

For the sake of the nature and mission and message of the Church, the Church's theologians must be willing to take a position, take a stand, sound a certain trumpet. The Seventh-day Adventist theologian must be assertive, positive, defining. He must "thin slice" for the sake of the Church. Such theological instruction, nurture, and guidance, however,

must be done (as per Paul) with patience, compassion, and love (2 Tim. 4:2; Eph. 4:15).

The reality of theological "thin slicing" is that theologians "thin slice" matters that their colleagues may not be able to see, at least at first. A theologian who intuits correctly on a matter may himself be in need of being "thin sliced" by their colleagues on a matter they may not be aware of in their own positions and assertions. Theologians then, must come along side one another and listen to what one another sees or hears or intuits as theological reality—both from a critical and constructive perspective. There are moments when every theologian needs corrective "thin slicing" from his or her colleagues or the Church. There are moments too, when others intuit the far-reaching contribution or perceptive direction of a theologian's idea's or projects better than the one articulating and it at the time and need to come along side with words of encouragement. It's about both holding one another accountable and encouraging one another in our stewardship as a theological resource for the Church.

Being open to the "thin slicing" of one's peers demands a stewardship of submission not only to the nature, mission, and message of the Church, but to one another as thought leaders within the Church. In this way the Holy Spirit enables organic corrective, empowerment, synthesis of thought, passion and defining vision. This calls for a humility and mutual submission of purpose and thought in behalf of one another and the Church. The combining of our thinking and coming into line with one another as well as pushing the edge with one another will enable a vibrancy for the Church that is needed for the Church to fulfill its mission in the world—especially as the Church becomes increasingly younger and conservative. This closing-of-ranks, coming into line, and faith-affirming theology on the cutting edge, together with a prophetic-impulsed "thin slicing" enables the Church to remain properly oriented toward the open future it faces.

It is in this way that the Seventh-day Adventist theologian is a sentinel as well as a steward. She is watching from the walls, looking both within (into the Church) and without (into the world), cutting a straight line (2 Tim. 2:15). He is thin slicing. Understanding the times and the issues. This enables one to "keep their head" theologically, emotionally, psychologically, morally, spiritually—in terms of the pattern of truth and prophetic vision of things—in all situations (2 Tim.

4:5 NIV).[58] He/she does not bend under the pressures of the times. Nor is he or she influenced by the murmuring or frightened or demanding leaders or lay-people.

Worldview is a fundamental perspective and tool in one's theological duties and responsibilities. It enables one to stay on their feet and steady the Church in the anxiety of our confusing and challenging times. It enables one to steady those around them with calm assurance in the Word of truth and where God is leading His people through the sure word of prophecy (1 Pet. 1:19). The Seventh-day Adventist theologian will be able to affirm that the pattern of truth entrusted to us will still be the truth — today, tomorrow, the day after, during earth's final moments, and when Jesus comes, because truth never dies. They will be able to affirm a heavenly sanctuary and that it isn't going anywhere just because some say it doesn't really exist. They will be able to affirm a pre-advent judgment that is still going on. How God still hates pride. How men are still born in sin. How men must still be born again. That dead folk are still dead. That Christ is still our only Savior. That lifestyle matters. That none but the righteous shall see God. That our prophetic message is still valid and very much relevant. That the Creation account is more than theological or metaphorical. And if we stand around waiting for our truth to change, we're exactly like the rest of Christianity who want the Sabbath to change, and Creation to change, and lifestyle matters to change.[59] But the Word of God with its sure word of prophecy (2 Pet. 1:19) clarifies and prioritizes the issues: Sabbath/Sunday, spiritualism, sensuality, Scripture, soul (nature of man, state of man in death), creation, sanctuary, second coming, Spirit of Prophecy, Christian values and lifestyle, salvation by faith alone.

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[58] Paul uses the Greek νήφω — clearheaded, self-controlled, self-possessed, free from every form of mental and spiritual excess or confusion. Any conscientious theologian who faithfully stewards the Word of God for the people of God knows that it is not an easy task. Pressures (from theological adversaries who attack or malign, pragmatic leaders who want results, itching eared members who want the comfortable, controversial issues defying easy answers, the conservative-liberal debates, extremists, etc.) not only tempt one to abandon or adjust their theology, but can be emotionally and spiritually exhausting rendering one vulnerable to personal moral and spiritual compromise. Our identity, reputation, personal life, hurts and history are entwined in our work.

[59] C. D. Brooks. "I Want My Church Back," in *Here We Stand: Evaluating New Trends in the Church* (ed. Samuel Koranteng-Pipim; Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Affirm, 2005), 94.

VI. Conclusion

The duties and responsibilities of the Seventh-day Adventist theologian are both definable and elusive. We have chosen here to explore four of the more elusive aspects.

First: The Seventh-day Adventist theologian stewards truth (the pattern of sound doctrine) entrusted to the Church by God for its redemptive mission in the world. His/her duties and responsibilities provide a competent theological resource to the Church. Stewarding the truth means surrendering to the truth. Growing deeper in the truth. Walking long in the way of truth. Never being ashamed of the truth. Sharing the truth at every opportune moment. Casting it like seed in the church and the world.

Second: The Seventh-day Adventist theologian is biblically focused and measured, giving hermeneutical and interpretive priority to the truth of Scripture over the truths arrived through philosophical and scientific methodologies (i.e., he/she understands that his/her authority and power and as well as that of the Church in the world lies in the Word of God—the Church has no authority or transforming power of her own).

Third: The Seventh-day Adventist theologian understands that his/her own moral spiritual person impacts their theological enterprise and the power of their theological influence to truly spiritually transform lives (i.e., the theologian makes the theology, dead theologians produce and/or teach dead theology, living theologians are God-touched, God-enabled, God-made and produce true theology).

Fourth: The Seventh-day Adventist theologian is propelled by a prophetic worldview that enables defining theological vision and nurtures a clear Seventh-day Adventist identity and which enables the Adventist theologian to keeps his/her head (theologically, emotionally, psychologically, morally, and spiritually) in order to steward the truth and guide the church in confusing times.

That graduation day on which I sat in the car holding my Ph.D diploma in hand and thinking back 15 years to when I "thin sliced" my colleague concluding in my heart, "He's no longer a Seventh-day Adventist in his thinking," I reminded myself of my own capacity to both distort and stray from the pattern of truth given us as an Adventist people. That day I took my diploma, my dissertation, my doctoral sash designating advanced accomplishments in theology, and went into the sanctuary of the Church where I pastor. There all alone down by the pulpit where my congregation gathers weekly for its garden of prayer, I

knelt down before God and praised Him for hearing my prayer so long ago and opening the way for my advanced studies. There I told him that all that I am and all that I had accomplished were His gracious gift. There I humbled myself before Him and dedicated my heart, my mind, my influence, my vision, my energies—myself as a theologian and my theology—to faith-affirming service. As a Seventh-day Adventist theologian, I am not my own. I am a thought leader for God in His Church. Everything that I am and do is consecrated to Him.

Such consecration is a daily matter, because as we have learned, the theologian makes the theology.

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Justification by Faith: An Adventist Understanding

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Introduction

Seventh-day Adventists believe that they have been called to proclaim the everlasting gospel to every nation, tribe, language, and people, in the context of the messages of the three angels in Revelation 14:6-12. These messages are God's final appeal to the human race before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (see Rev 14:14-20). The expression "everlasting gospel," which occurs only in this passage in the New Testament, has important implications. First of all, it implies that the gospel was in the purpose of God from eternity. This eternal divine purpose is rooted in God's everlasting love as stated in Jeremiah 31:3 and John 3:16. Secondly, it implies that there is only one gospel by which fallen human beings can be saved and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ, as Paul often refers to it (Rom 15:9; 1 Cor 9:12; etc.). In other words from the days of Adam and Eve until the end of the world there has been and there ever will be only one gospel, one way of salvation. In the words of the apostle, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph 2:8-9). Peter, speaking of salvation through Jesus Christ before the religious rulers of Israel was very emphatic, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).[1] Adventists have always perceived themselves as heirs of the great truths recovered and proclaimed by the Protestant Reformers. As stated in

[1] Scripture quotations are taken from *Holy Scripture, New International Version*.

the concluding report of another bilateral dialogue: "Adventists have a high appreciation for the Reformation. They see themselves as heirs of Luther and other Reformers, especially in their adherence to the great principles of *sola scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide, solo Christo*."[2] This places Adventists in harmony with the traditional Evangelical understanding of justification by faith and also with the patristic tradition, for, according to Thomas Oden, "The major Reformers' appeals to *sola scriptura, sola gratia,* and *sola fide* are found abundantly in the patristic interpreters of scripture."[3] In this paper we intend to present the Adventist understanding of the unity of the teaching of Scripture on justification by faith in Christ alone through grace alone. Next an alleged conflict between some specific Adventist teachings, such as their emphasis on Sabbath observance, and the traditional Protestant understanding of justification by faith will be considered.

The Foundational Teaching of Justification by Faith in the Old Testament

The unity of Scripture does not mean uniformity. To expect very explicit theological statements in the Old Testament such as are found in the Pauline writings shows a lack of appreciation of the diversity in God's revelations to and dealings with his inspired messengers. Yet, Paul himself appeals to the Old Testament to show the unity between his teaching on justification by faith or righteousness by faith with that of Moses and the prophets. "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify" (Rom 3:21). It is therefore essential to study carefully what the Old Testament teaches about righteousness and justification. Obviously, here we can deal only with some of the most pertinent aspects of the subject.

The Old Testament proclaims the righteousness of God in all his dealings with Israel. In the majestic song, which Moses by divine command taught the Israelites to sing, Moses proclaims the name of the Lord in these words: "He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A

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[2] *Lutherans & Adventists in Conversation: Report and Papers Presented 1994-1998* (Silver Spring, Maryland: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; Geneva, Switzerland: The Lutheran World Federation, 2000), 8.

[3] Thomas C. Oden, *The Justification Reader* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Cambridge, United Kingdom: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 162.

faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he" (Deut 32:4). Yahweh's righteousness is manifested, according to the covenant blessings and curses of Deuteronomy chapter twenty eight, in acts of judgment (see for instance 2 Chr 12:1-6; Dan 9: 3-14; Neh 9:8) and in acts of salvation. The latter are at times referred to as the *tsidqot Yahweh,* which can be translated as the righteousnesses or the righteous acts of the Lord (see for instance Judg 5:10; 1 Sam 12:6-7; Mic 6:5). It is important to realize that in the Old Testament the righteousness of God is often equivalent to the salvation of God as can be observed in Hebrew parallelism (see Isa 51:6, 8).

When it comes to human righteousness, the Old Testament presents us with an apparent paradox. There are persistent and emphatic statements that nobody is righteous, that all have sinned. David pleaded with God, "Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you" (Ps 143:2). Solomon acknowledged in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, "there is no one who does not sin" (1 Chr 6:36). That thought he repeats in Ecclesiastes 7:20, "There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins." Moses three times told the Israelites not to think that the Lord was giving them the land of Canaan because of their righteousness; to the contrary he asserted, "you are a stiff-necked people" (Deut 9:4-6). The paradox is that the same writers and the entire Old Testament make a distinction between two classes of human beings: "the righteous" and "the wicked" or similar contrasting distinctions. This raises the crucial question, "How can any human beings be called righteous in face of the assertion that no one is righteous and that all have sinned"? The urgency of this question is intensified when we find people who are designated as righteous or blameless or "friend of God" or "highly esteemed," such as Noah, Job, Abraham, and Daniel (see Gen 7:1; Job 1:1; Isa 41:8; Dan 9:23), as having committed sin or confessing sin. It is evident that their righteousness is not identical with sinlessness. How, then, can they be called righteous or blameless? Edmund Clowney highlights how crucial this question is: "How can a man be just with God? The whole history of the Old Testament hinges on God's answer to that question."[4]

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[4] Edmund P. Clowney, "The Biblical Doctrine of Justification by Faith," in *Right With God: Justification in the Bible and the World,* ed. D.A. Carson, Published on behalf of the World Evangelical Fellowship (Paternoster Press; Baker Book House, 1992), 24; cf. page 23, "Indeed, it is the great question for the whole Old Testament."

The clear-cut answer is that Yahweh, the covenant God, justifies all who believe in him, who trust his promises, who acknowledge their sin, who cast themselves on the mercy of God, and turn away from their unrighteousness. Of Abraham we read, "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6). Job, of whom the Lord testified that he was "blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil," was asked by the same Lord, "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?" (Job 40:8). Before the holy and righteous God Job recognized his sinfulness and replied, "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). David, the anointed of the Lord, when convicted of his sin against God through adultery and murder, confessed his sin and found forgiveness (2 Sam 12:13). According to Psalms 32 and 51 he was justified before God and could sing, "Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous, sing, all who are upright in heart!" (Ps 32:11). This is justification by faith through grace alone. The righteousness of the righteous in the Old Testament is a gift from the righteous Lord. That is why David throughout the Psalms exalts the righteousness of God. Paul stated the truth when he asserted that the Law and the Prophets testify to "a righteousness from God, apart from law" (Rom 3:21).

These Old Testament themes are more fully developed by Edmund Clowney in his chapter, "The Biblical Doctrine of Justification by Faith," in the book *Right with God: Justification in the Bible and the World,* published in 1992 on behalf of the World Evangelical Fellowship. Seventh-day Adventists would, I believe, wholeheartedly agree with much if not all of Clowney's thorough biblical presentation.[5] Clowney, following McGrath, shows that the Hebrew verb *hasdiq* "always means 'to declare to be in the right', and therefore to acquit or vindicate." With an appeal to Deuteronomy 25:1, where the judges of Israel are commanded to "justify the righteous and condemn the wicked," he states that it "is clear that 'condemn' must mean 'to *declare to be* wicked', not 'to *make* wicked' (emphasis his), and that "justify' must mean 'to declare to be righteous', and not 'to make righteous'. This meaning is consistent in the Old

[5] Clowney, "The Biblical Doctrine of Justification by Faith," in *Right With God,* 17-50.

Testament."[6] The Lord admonishes judges to give just verdicts because God is the supreme Judge, who testifies of himself, "I will not acquit [or justify] the guilty" (Exod 23:7). While God is speaking here in the context of earthly courts of justice, it becomes apparent when we progress through the Scriptures that this statement has a deep soteriological significance. It is necessary to stress that "to justify" is a legal term, declaring that someone is not guilty; this basic meaning of justification as a judicial verdict is retained even when it takes on a broader meaning in God's progressive revelation and in theological reflection on that revelation.

Justification by Faith in Christ Alone

Seventh-day Adventists firmly and wholeheartedly believe that salvation is purely a gift from God in Jesus Christ. Sinful as we are, we can add nothing to the perfect righteousness of Christ, which he wrought out in his incarnation by his perfect obedience to the law of God and by his death on the cross for our sins. In the words of one of the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists:

> In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness. Fundamental Beliefs, 9.[7]

"Salvation through Christ alone" is central to the Adventist understanding and experience of salvation. Although during our history of more than one hundred sixty years it did not always receive due emphasis, this central belief can be traced throughout that period with increasing accentuation and articulation in books, tracts, and periodicals flowing by the

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[6] Ibid., 23; Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification,* Vol. 1, *The Beginnings to the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 12.

[7] "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists, 9. 'Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ,'" in *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, 2006* ([Silver Springs, Maryland:] The General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists, 2006), 5.

millions from Adventist publishing houses worldwide. The same is true for Adventist evangelism in a myriad different forms from small study groups in private homes to high-tech evangelism by means of satellite and the worldwide web. Here, we can only highlight some significant evidences of this Christocentric emphasis in the Adventist understanding of justification by faith.

In the writings of Ellen White, Adventism's most widely read author, Christ is consistently presented as the only hope and the only way of salvation for sinful human beings. She wrote in 1891, "Of all professed Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world."[8] She herself did just that as her writings bear witness. Concerning justification by faith she was very explicit. Notice her strong emphasis:

> There is not a point that needs to be dwelt upon more earnestly, repeated more frequently, or established more firmly in the minds of all than the impossibility of fallen man meriting anything by his own best good works. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone.[9]

> The blood of Christ was shed to atone for sin and to cleanse the sinner; and we must take hold of the merits of Christ's blood, and believe that we have life through his name. Let not the fallacies of Satan deceive you; you are justified by faith alone; . . . [10]

It is not surprising that Ellen White had a very high regard for Paul's epistle to the Romans. "With great clearness and power the apostle presented the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ." She comments on the fact that Paul could but dimly foresee the far-reaching influence his words would have. "Through all the ages the great truth of justification by faith has stood as a mighty beacon to guide repentant sinners into the way of life." She mentions Martin Luther's experience and then concludes that

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[8] Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1915), 156; Idem, *Manuscript Releases,* Volume 9 (Silver Springs, Maryland: E.G. White Estate, 1990), 294.

[9] Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1979), 19.

[10] Ellen G. White, "Faith Does Not Make Void the Law," *Signs of the Times*, March 24, 1890.

for "the epistle to the church at Rome every Christian has reason to thank God."[11] The importance of the epistle to the Romans and other epistles of Paul for Adventist understanding of the gospel is manifested in scholarly publications as well as general biblical and devotional reading materials.[12]

As stated earlier, Adventists believe that there is only one way of salvation from Genesis to Revelation and that way is faith in Christ and his righteousness. This central belief can be and has been expressed in different words, just as the Scriptures are not monotonous but present the truth of the everlasting gospel in diverse ways. While Adventist scholars may differ of opinion in regard to certain aspects of the gospel, just as differences can be found among scholars of other denominations, there is significant unity concerning the doctrine of justification through grace alone by faith alone. In the words of Adventist theologian Hans LaRondelle:

> Basic to Adventism is the gospel principle that human salvation is not through the law or by human works but solely through the saving grace of God … Adventist belief accepts Christ as man's substitute and example, in this irreversible order. Faith in Christ as our substitute before God provides our justification as God's act of *declaring* (emphasis his) the repentant believer righteous. Justification is seen as the opposite of condemnation (see Rom. 5:16; 8:1, 33, 34). The basis for the believer's justification is not their law observance, but Christ's sinless obedience (Rom. 5:18, 19).[13]

Undoubtedly justification is primarily a judicial declaration by God that the sinner who believes in Christ is righteous. It is the opposite of condemnation. But the faith by which we are justified is not merely a mental assent to a certain doctrine. It is a living faith that takes hold of Christ and His atoning sacrifice. Luther distinguished between "acquired faith" and "true faith". He wrote: "Acquired faith has as the end or use of

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[11]Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1911), 373, 374.

[12] See for instance the daily devotional for adults by George R. Knight, *Walking With Paul Through the Book of Romans* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 2002).

[13] Hans K. LaRondelle, "The Seventh-day Adventist View of the Relationship of Justification—Sanctification—the Final Judgment," in *Lutherans & Adventists in Conversation,* 123.

Christ's passion mere speculation. True faith has as the end and use of Christ's passion life and salvation. . . . True faith with arms outstretched joyfully embraces the Son of God given for it and says, 'He is my beloved, and I am His.'"[14] Ellen White in a similar vein wrote that there "are thousands who believe in the gospel and in Jesus Christ as the world's Redeemer, but they are not saved by that faith. This is only an assent of their judgment to that which is a fact," . . . She calls this a general faith and contrasts this with a faith that lays hold upon Christ as one's sin-pardoning Savior, a faith that leads to repentance, "a faith that accomplishes its work for the receiver, a faith in the atoning sacrifice, a faith that works by love and purifies the soul."[15] She further clarified this faith with these words, "The moment true faith in the merits of the costly atoning sacrifice is exercised, claiming Christ as a personal Savior, that moment the sinner is justified before God, because he is pardoned."[16]

Some Alleged Problem Areas of Adventist Teaching in Relation to Justification by Faith

Seventh-day Adventists have not escaped accusations that they do not really hold the biblical teaching of justification by grace alone through faith alone. Anthony Hoekema in his book *The Four Major Cults,* expresses as his conviction that Adventists, "though they claim to teach salvation by grace alone," are in reality guilty of a kind of mixed legalism.[17] He bases this on the Adventist doctrine of the investigative judgment and their teaching in regard to the need to keep the seventh day as the Sabbath, the proper Lord's Day (especially in the eschatological setting of Rev 13:11-17).[18] For these and a number of other reasons he classifies Seventh-day Adventism as a cult. Similar criticisms have been raised by others, not least by some former Adventists. Not everyone agrees with Hoekema's assessment. It is noteworthy that Evangelical scholar Walter Martin in his

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[14] Quoted in Robin A. Leaver, *Luther on Justification* (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), 30.

[15] Ellen G. White, "Justified by Faith," in *Manuscript Releases*, Volume 8 (Silver Springs, Maryland: E.G. White Estate, 1990), 356.

[16] Ibid., 357.

[17] Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults* (Exeter, United Kingdom: Paternoster Press, 1969), 126.

[18] Ibid., 126-128.

work *The Kingdom of the Cults* shows some serious inconsistencies in Hoekema's reasoning. Although Martin himself does not agree with certain Adventist beliefs, he accepts as genuine their emphatic affirmation "that salvation comes only by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ's sacrifice upon the cross."[19]

It is true that Adventists believe that the law of the Ten Commandments, including the seventh-day Sabbath, is still binding upon the human race.[20] But this does not mean that they believe in any sense that sinners can be justified by obedience to God's commandments. As stated before, they emphatically reject the idea that sinners are justified through their obedience to God's law. In this respect Adventist belief agrees with the position of the Protestant Reformers as stated, for instance, in the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566, which says in Chapter 12, entitled, "Of the Law of God":

> We teach that this law [the Law of God] was not given to men that they might be justified by keeping it, but that rather from what it teaches we may know (our) weakness, sin and condemnation, and, despairing of our strength, might be converted to Christ in faith. For the apostle openly declares: "The law brings wrath," and, "Through the law comes knowledge of sin" (Rom. 4:15; 3:20), and, "If a law had been given which could justify or make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture (that is, the law) has concluded all under sin, that the promise which was of the faith of Jesus might be given to those who believe. . . . Therefore, the law was our schoolmaster unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:21 ff.).[21]

The same article, however, starts by affirming "that the will of God is explained for us in the law of God, what he wills or does not will us to do, what is good and just, or what is evil and unjust. Therefore, we confess that the law is good and holy."[22] Adventists, accepting such affirmation as

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[19] Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1985), 435.

[20] "*Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists*, 19. 'Law of God,'" in *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2006*, 7.

[21] Arthur C. Cochrane, ed., *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 248.

[22] Ibid., 247.

congruent with the teaching of Scripture, believe that the new covenant promise of the Lord, as given through Jeremiah and repeated in Hebrews 8:10, "I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people," is to be fulfilled in the life of all who accept Jesus Christ as their savior and high priest. While Paul emphatically maintains "that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law," which is true for Jews and Gentiles, in the same context affirms that through this faith we do not nullify the law; "Rather, we uphold the law" (Rom 3:28, 31). Elsewhere he states the same truth in different words, "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts" (1 Cor 7:19). This obedience results from the faith and love of Christ, implanted by the Holy Spirit, "for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Gal 5:6). Jesus, in the final words to his disciples before his crucifixion, spoke several times about this obedience born of love: "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15); "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love" (John 15:9-10); "You are my friends if you do what I command" (John 15:14). Adventists believe that it is this obedience of love to which Paul refers when he writes that "love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom 13:10).

While Adventists believe that Christians are called to "the obedience that comes from faith" (Rom 1:5) and that we are "created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph 2:10), they strenuously reject any suggestion that such obedience and good works are in some sense meritorious. The Council of Trent taught in its Decree on Justification that justification increases "through the observance of the commandments of God and of the Church, faith cooperating with good works;" it also taught the merit of good works as the fruits of justification.[23] Its canons on justification pronounced this condemnation that anyone who said "that the justice received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of its increase, let him be anathema." Another anathema condemned anyone saying "that the good

[23] H. J. Schroeder, trans., *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Rockford, Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers, 1978), 36 and 40-42.

works of the one justified are in such manner the gifts of God that they are not also the good merits of him justified, ..."[24] In other words justification is increased by obedience and good works, the good works not just being the gifts of God's grace but also the merits of the justified Christian. This belief was reconfirmed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, published with the papal blessing of John Paul II.[25] The *Catechism* also reconfirmed the Council of Trent's position that "Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man."[26] This view of justification was and still is emphatically rejected by consistent Protestants, including Seventh-day Adventists.[27]

That the issue is as relevant in the twenty-first century as in the sixteenth century is evident from the fact that Francis Beckwith, who was for a short time president of the Evangelical Theological Society, in May 2007 resigned his position and his membership in the Society, after in April rejoining the Roman Catholic Church (the Church in which he grew up). According to *Christianity Today* Beckwith changed his views on justification because he "found the Protestant view, which assumes that sanctification follows justification, inadequate."[28] Beckwith became convinced that the Roman Catholic view on justification "has more explanatory power to account for both the biblical texts on justification [and] the church's historical understanding of salvation prior to the Reformation, all the way back to the ancient church of the first few centuries."[29] This highlights the paramount importance and centrality of the doctrine of justification for all who accept the *sola Scriptura* principle. According to the *Christianity Today* editorial the Reformers "rightly taught

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[24] Ibid., 45 (Canon 24) and 46 (Canon 32).

[25] "Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, *no one can merit the initial grace* of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, *we can then merit* for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life" (emphasis is in the text). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1994), 487, paragraph 2010.

[26] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 482, paragraph 1989.

[27] An incisive Protestant critique of the Decree on Justification by the Council of Trent can be found in Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent, Part 1*, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 455-663.

[28] Editorial, "Virtue That Counts: Why Justification by Faith Alone Is Still Our Defining Doctrine," *Christianity Today,* July 2007, 20.

[29] Collin Hansen, "Leaving for Rome," *Christianity Today,* July 2007, 14.

that only Jesus' merit counted before God and that only through faith could this merit be ours."[30] Adventists wholeheartedly concur.

From the preceding discussion it should be clear that Seventh-day Adventists believe that keeping the Ten Commandments, including observing the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week, is seen as part of the obedience of faith. It is the fruit of justification, never the root. Christ refers to himself as Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28), obviously not to abolish the Sabbath, but that all who are justified by faith would follow their Lord in keeping the Sabbath as a memorial of creation as well as a seal of their redemption from the slavery of sin through Christ (see e.g. Exod 20: 8-11; 31: 12-17; Deut 5: 12-15; Ezek 20: 12, 20). There is not a trace of legalism in such Sabbath observance.

If our justification is through grace alone by faith alone does the obedience of faith have anything to do with our salvation? Or to phrase the question differently: do our thoughts, words, and actions play a role in determining our eternal destiny? These are crucial questions which are closely related to the issue of the final judgment. Scripture has much to say about that judgment, not least in the teachings of our Lord as recorded in the Gospels. Said Jesus: "I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted (RSV/NKJV "justified") and by your words you will be condemned" (Matt 12:36-37). Here our Lord talks about justification and condemnation (the judicial declarations of innocence and guilt) in the context of the day of judgment. Obviously, there is an eschatological aspect to justification. Adventists believe on the basis of Scripture that the day of judgment is a very comprehensive concept and much Adventist literature has been published on the subject.[31] Suffice it to say here that they hold that the judgment is to be distinguished in an investigative and an executive judgment. It is their belief in an investigative judgment that has led to the accusation that they do not really believe in the

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[30] Editorial, "Virtue That Counts," *Christianity Today,* July 2007, 20.

[31] See for instance Roy Gane, *Who's Afraid of the Judgment?* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2006); Gerhard F. Hasel, "Divine Judgment" in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Commentary Reference Series, Vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 815-856; Frank B. Holbrook, *The Atoning Priesthood of Jesus Christ* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1996).

Reformation principles of *sola fide, sola gratia*. In conclusion let us briefly look at the issue.

In Romans 8:1 Paul tells us that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Earlier he had affirmed that "since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1). All of this is a present reality. Elsewhere it is written, "God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: 'The Lord knows who are his'" (2Tim 2:19). It is sometimes argued that such texts show that for those who are in Christ there is no need to be judged and that the concept of an investigative judgment is unbiblical and takes away the assurance of salvation for believers. However, this kind of reasoning totally ignores the very clear teaching of Scripture that all will be judged. The apostle Paul is very emphatic about this fact. "We will all stand before God's judgment seat. . . . Each of us will give an account of himself to God" (Rom 14:10,12); "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2Cor 5:10). Other passages of Scripture can be added. Solomon wrote towards the end of his checkered life: "Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil" (Eccl 12:13-14). The apostle Peter informs us that judgment will begin with the family of God. All who in some way have professed faith in God and Christ will be judged before "those who do not obey the gospel of God" (1Pet 4:17). Do these assertions take away the assurance of our justification?

The clear-cut answer to that question is: "Not, if we remain in Christ!" Jesus in the parable of the vine and the branches stressed the crucial importance of remaining in him. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). He adds that if anyone who does not remain in him will be like a withered branch that is thrown into the fire and burned (vs. 6). The final judgment will bring to light who remained in Christ and who did not. It will be manifested in whether our faith in Christ bore fruit in the obedience of faith or whether it was a sterile faith (cf. James 2:17, 26). It will bring to light in the presence of the entire universe who kept the faith of Christ and who lost hold of the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Paul's assurance of eternal life is rooted in the fact that "he had kept the faith"

(2Tim 4:7), his faith in Christ as his Savior and Lord, the righteous Judge from whom he would receive the crown of righteousness. LaRondelle stresses the relation between the present justification of believers and their justification in the final judgment:

> Paul based our certainty of future salvation on the reality of our present salvation, the certainty of our future justification on the reality of our present justification: "Since we have now been justified by his blood, *how much the more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!"* (Rom. 5:9, emphasis added; see also verse 17). In other words, when Jesus justifies us, we have full assurance that He will justify us in the final judgment if we remain in him.[32]

In a different way P.T. O'Brien, contributor to the book *Right With God*, also stresses the relation between justification by faith and judgment according to works. He makes it clear, however, that "The ground of justification lies not in works, nor in faith, but 'in the revelation of God's grace in Christ embraced by faith'. Works are indispensable for they demonstrate the presence of true faith and are evidence of one's being united with Christ in his death and resurrection."[33] Adventists agree and believe that the judgment, whether the investigative judgment or the executive judgment, is good news for all who, like Paul, by God's grace have kept the faith, faith in Christ.

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[32] Hans K. LaRondelle, *Assurance of Salvation* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1999), 99. Herman Ridderbos succinctly discusses the subject, "Judgment According to Works," in his excellent book *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard De Witt (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 178-181.

[33] P. T. O'Brien, "Justification in Paul and Some Crucial Issues of the Last Two Decades," in *Right With God: Justification in the Bible and the World*, ed. D. A. Carson, Published on behalf of the World Evangelical Fellowship (Paternoster Press; Baker Book House, 1992), 94. The quotation within the quotation is taken from Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, 180.

five different countries. He has taught for more than thirty years at Caribbean Union College in Trinidad, Newbold College in England, and since 1993 at Andrews University. He has contributed articles to several periodicals and to symposia, among them *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (2000), *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach* (2006), *Christ, Salvation, and the Eschaton: Essays in Honor of Hans K. LaRondelle* (2009), and *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers* (2010). vanbemp@andrews.edu

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Early Seventh-day Adventist Views on Calvin and Calvinism

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Over the course of their history, Seventh-day Adventists have repeatedly acknowledged their debt to the Protestant Reformation. Nowhere else is this acknowledgment more clearly made than in Ellen G. White's *Great Controversy*.[1] In that work, White weaves together a narrative centering on how God's truth had been preserved and passed down throughout the history of Western Christianity. Prominent in that narrative are the stories of the precursors and major leaders of the Protestant Reformation. Nowhere is the close connection that Adventists feel toward the reformers more clearly expressed than in the 1957 book, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, which portrays Adventism as a continuation of "the noble line of witnesses such as [John] Wycliffe, [Martin] Luther, [William] Tyndale, [John] Calvin, [John] Knox, [John] Wesley, and other great leaders of the past."[2]

Although Adventists have seen their roots in the Reformation, not all of the reformers have received equal attention. As a case in point, out of the ten chapters allotted to the Reformation period in *Great Controversy*, Luther's story is told in four chapters, while one chapter is given to

[1] Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911).

[2] *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 9.

Wycliffe and Ulrich Zwingli each. John Huss, Jerome of Prague, and Calvin receive only half-chapter length treatments, while others such as Philip Melanchthon, Jacques Lefevre, William Farel, Menno Simons, and John Knox receive only passing notices. Clearly, there were greater and lesser lights among the Protestant reformers, but if one were to determine the relative stature of the reformers merely by the attention given in *Great Controversy*, most students of Christian history would rightly argue that the significance of Calvin was the most egregiously understated.

The reality is that Calvin has never enjoyed the kind of favor Adventists have shown toward Luther or Wesley. Although Adventists have traditionally shared many of the core teachings of Calvin such as the infallibility of the Bible as a whole, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, regeneration and sanctification of the believer, and the perpetuity of the moral law, they have always held suspicion toward Calvin and the Calvinist movement. Even in recent studies on the relationship between the Reformation and Adventism, one finds very few references to Calvin and his work in Geneva,[3] while some who call themselves "historic Adventists" have warned against the heretical "Calvinist connection" that has formed in the church.[4] As of yet, the historical relationship between Adventism and Calvin and Calvinism has received neither proper attention nor extended analysis. This paper seeks to fill part of that void by describing and analyzing the place and value of Calvin and Calvinism in the major writings of four major Seventh-day Adventist pioneers—John N. Andrews, Alonzo T. Jones, Uriah Smith, and Ellen G. White. This study does not attempt to ascertain theological influences of Calvin or Calvinism upon Adventism. Rather, it seeks merely to describe how the four Adventist pioneers viewed Calvin and Calvinism. Only the passages where the

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[3] See, for example, W. L. Emmerson, *The Reformation and the Advent Movement* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1983). Notable exceptions are: Bryan W. Ball, *The English Connection* (Cambridge, England: James Clarke, 1981), and Hugh Dunton, Daniel Heinz, and Ronald Strasdowsky, eds., *Heirs of the Reformation: The Story of Seventh-day Adventists in Europe* (Grantham, England: Stanborough Press, 1997). However, rather than tracing the roots of Adventism to the Reformation, these works tend toward merely pointing out similarities between reformers and Adventists.

[4] See, for example, Joe Crews, *The Calvinist Connection* (Frederick, MD: Amazing Facts, 1992).

writers make direct references to either Calvin, Calvinism, Presbyterianism, or the Reformed tradition receive treatment in this paper.

John N. Andrews

John Nevins Andrews was the leading thinker and scholar among the earliest Seventh-day Adventist pioneers.[5] His intellect and balanced judgment commanded wide respect in the church. He was also the church's first official missionary to outside of North America. At his departure to Switzerland, Ellen White remarked that he was "the ablest man in all our ranks."[6]

Among the numerous books that he wrote for the advancement of the Adventist cause, Andrews made references to Calvin and Calvinism in three of his books: *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week*,[7] *The Judgment: Its Events and Their Order*,[8] and *The Three Messages of Revelation XIV, 6-12*.[9] As Andrews referred to Calvin only once in passing in the latter two works, *History of the Sabbath* is of primary concern in this section.

In the passages where Andrews makes references to Calvin, it is difficult to establish his appraisal of Calvin. In the discussion of Calvin's position on the issue of the Sabbath and Sunday, Andrews's analysis is detached and objective. In general, Andrews's opinion of Calvin seems to be of cool disagreement. In Calvin, Andrews finds support for his thesis that Sunday replaced the seventh-day Sabbath on extra-biblical, thus illegitimate, grounds. Andrews finds ammunition against the Sunday-keepers of his time in Calvin's statements from the *Institutes* that the Christian Sunday is not a simple continuation of the Jewish Sabbath changed into the first day of the week, but a distinctively Christian

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[5] *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1996 ed., s.v. "Andrews, John Nevins."

[6] Ellen G. White to Brethren in Switzerland, Aug. 29, 1878, as quoted in George R. Knight, *The Fat Lady and the Kingdom* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), 66.

[7] John N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventists, 1873).

[8] John N. Andrews, *The Judgment: Its Events and Their Order* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1890).

[9] John N. Andrews, *The Three Messages of Revelation XIV, 6-12* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1892).

institution that has no inherent sanctity but a functional one.[10] Andrews adroitly utilizes Calvin's own admission that the "ancients" changed the day of worship and that clinging to the seventh day of the week has no special meaning.[11] Thus, Andrews uses Calvin's writings as a polemic tool against the arguments set forth by Sunday-keeping Christians of the mid-nineteenth century that change in the day of worship occurred in the New Testament era.

Elsewhere in the same book, Andrews makes reference to Calvin as a theological authority on points other than the doctrine of the Sabbath.[12] In one of these instances, he quotes another author who has called Calvin "great" and as possessing "sagacity."[13] Calvin's greatness is further recognized in Andrews's *The Judgment*. In his discussion of the interpretation of 1 Cor 6:2, Andrews makes use of a quote of another writer who lists "modern divines" such as "Luther, Calvin, Erasmus, Beza. . . ."[14]

Such a deferential reference to Calvin is counterbalanced in *The Three Messages of Revelation XIV, 6-12*, where Andrews makes a criticism of Calvin's persecution of Michael Servetus, an anti-Trinitarian agitator of the sixteenth century. He uses this episode in Calvin's work as an example of how easily the power of the church, if absolute, gets corrupted. He writes:

> When the papal church possessed power, it destroyed a vast multitude of the saints of God. Nor has the Protestant Church, since its rise, been free from acts of persecution whenever it has possessed the power to perform them. The Protestants of Geneva, with John Calvin at their head, burned Michael Servetus, a man who had barely escaped the same fate at the hands of the popish inquisition. They did this for the same reason that the papists do the like; that is, they did it for a difference of opinion, and because they had the power to do it.[15]

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[10] *History of the Sabbath*, 438, 439. The section in Calvin's *Institutes of Christian Religion* that Andrews quotes from is book 2, chapter 8, paragraphs 31-34.

[11] See *History of the Sabbath*, 436-446.

[12] See ibid., 10, 74, 239.

[13] Ibid., 239.

[14] *The Judgment*, 122.

[15] *The Three Messages of Revelation XIV, 6-12*, 44.

The criticism is even more damning in that Andrews draws a direct parallel between Calvin and the papacy which Calvin opposed vehemently.

In conclusion, Andrews's view of Calvin is at best mixed. Without a doubt, Andrews views Calvin as a figure to be reckoned with in church history and recognizes his theological contributions, though through the words of others. However, when it comes to the issue of the Sabbath, Andrews uses Calvin's writings against Calvin himself and against those Sunday-keeping Christians who claim that there are Scriptural grounds for change in the day of worship. Calvin then becomes the object of a scathing attack by Andrews over the execution of Servetus—an act which Andrews likens to "the popish inquisition."[16] Such an assessment of Calvin—as a theological force and an ecclesiastical despot—is a recurring picture painted by Adventists of the nineteenth century.

Alonzo T. Jones

Alonzo Trevier Jones was among Adventism's first historians. As "the denomination's most prominent speaker for religious freedom,"[17] he tended to view history from the perspective of the continuing controversy between the oppressive civil-ecclesiastical majority and the persecuted religious minority. All his historical works fall in line with such a perspective, and it is in this context that Calvin and Calvinism are viewed. Two of Jones's works include meaningful references to Calvin and Calvinism. They are *Civil Government and Religion*[18] and *The Two Republics*.[19]

In his 1889 book, *Civil Government and Religion*, Jones makes only one reference to Calvin. This reference comes in the context of his repudiation of David McAllister, a spokesperson for the National Reform movement which was pushing for a national Sunday law. McAllister had stated that the movement would not result in persecution against those who believe differently from the majority and declared: "True religion never

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[16] Ibid.

[17] *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1996 ed., s.v. "Jones, Alonzo T."

[18] Alonzo T. Jones, *Civil Government and Religion, or Christianity and the American Constitution* (Chicago: American Sentinel, 1889).

[19] Alonzo T. Jones, *The Two Republics; or, Rome and the United States of America* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1891).

persecutes," even if it was united with the civil government.[20] In reaction to this assertion, Jones points out that

> the Roman Catholic religion is not the only persecuting religion that has been in the world. Presbyterianism persecuted while John Calvin ruled in Geneva; it persecuted while the Covenanters ruled in Scotland; it persecuted while it held the power in England . . . . Every religion that has been allied with the civil power, or that has controlled the civil power, has been a persecuting religion; and such will always be the case.[21]

Presaging Andrews's analysis, Jones here makes a sharp criticism of Calvin's role in exercising civil authority for a religious end. Clearly, the Servetus affair is on his mind as he portrays Calvin as a persecuting power who acted just like the Roman Catholics. Furthermore, Jones seems to be reacting to two things: (1) the "popish" dogmatism of Calvin; and (2) Calvinism as a domineering force not only during the Reformation but also in the ensuing times. Though the denominational affiliations of Jones's opponents are not clearly identified, his citation of Presbyterian persecution throughout history seems to be a not-so-subtle reference to the Calvinist background of many behind the Sunday law movement. In Jones's mind, not only the historical papacy, but also Calvinism of his time are potential persecutors of God's true religion.

Jones continues this line of argument in his 1891 work, *The Two Republics*. In this book, he has a section entitled "Calvinism in Geneva." He begins this section by stating that "[t]he views of Calvin on the subject of Church and State, were as thoroughly theocratic as the papal system itself."[22] Pointing out Calvin's efforts to secure the oath of each citizen of Geneva to profess and swear to the confession drawn up by Calvin himself, Jones observes that "[t]his was at once to make the Church and the State one and the same thing with the Church above the State. Yea, more than this, it was wholly to swallow up the civil in the ecclesiastical power . . . ."[23]

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[20] *Civil Government and Religion*, 106.
[21] Ibid.
[22] *The Two Republics*, 586.
[23] Ibid.

Clearly, Jones's criticism of Calvin's theocracy is based on the distinctly American understanding of the separation of church and state. But when it comes to his treatment of Luther in the same chapter, Jones turns much more generous—and wrong about history: "It is not without cause that Luther stands at the head of all men in the great Reformation and in the history of Protestantism: for he alone of all the leaders in the history of Reformation times held himself and his cause aloof from the powers of this world, and declined all connection of the State with the work of the gospel, even to support it."[24] Given Luther's nationalism in his "Appeal to the German Nobility," his association with the German princes, the Wartburg period, and his position vis-à-vis the Peasants' Revolt, Jones's statement that Luther did not even have any "connection of the State" appears hardly tenable. Historically, both Luther and Calvin were active supporters of the idea of cooperation and even collusion of the church and the state. Yet it is only Calvin who receives Jones's condemnation in this chapter probably because Calvin went much beyond Luther in taking an active part in governing Geneva and wielded a great amount of power. Apparently, for Jones, this made all the difference, as he calls Calvin the Protestant counterpart to the pope and Calvinism "so close a counterpart" to "the papacy itself."[25] Commenting on the efforts of the National Reform Association, Jones writes, "it is a revival of the original scheme of John Calvin, and is the very image of the papal scheme of the fourth century."[26]

In conclusion, Jones consistently treats Calvin as a "popish" tyrant and his movement as a persecuting authority that fused religious and temporal powers to oppress minority religious groups. Seeing the rise of the National Reform movement in his time, Jones considers it as a continuation of the dangerously theocratic system as practiced two centuries earlier in Geneva. As to Calvin's positive contributions to the Protestant Reformation and its theology, Jones is completely silent, leaving his readers with a decidedly negative impression about the reformer.

Uriah Smith

[24] Ibid., 569.
[25] Ibid., 590.
[26] Ibid., 708.

Uriah Smith made his contribution to the Adventist church most prominently through his pen. *The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* article on Smith begins with this summative introduction: "Editor and author, who gave 50 years of service to the SDA cause."[27] The *Encyclopedia* goes on to state that Smith's famous works on Daniel and Revelation[28] were the first of the "doctrinal subscription books in the colporteur work of the SDA Church."[29] Indeed, Smith was the first among the church's theologians, and his influence has been profound and far-reaching.

Smith's writings betray the same negative view that Andrews and Jones held toward Calvin's persecution of certain minority groups of his day. Once again, the burning of Servetus is cited as an evidence of the spirit of oppression and intolerance that Smith saw in the Calvinism of his time. In Smith's *Daniel and the Revelation*, an updated and consolidated version of his earlier separate works on the two prophetic books of the Bible, the Servetus incident is brought out not only to show the potential of persecution in the nineteenth century, but also to point out that Protestantism has always held the spirit of Babylon as seen in Rev 14:8.[30] Smith does not elaborate further, thus readers are left with a clear connection between Calvin and the eschatological Babylon. Smith asserts that not only Calvinism, but also all the other churches of the Reformation are headed toward the apostasy of forming "the universal worldly church" that would oppress the people of God through the union of church and state.[31]

In *Looking unto Jesus*,[32] published also in 1897, Smith goes beyond the Servetus incident to critique certain features of the theology of Calvin and Calvinism. While discussing the Adventist teaching on Christ's post-1844 ministry in the heavenly Most Holy Place, Smith stresses that Christ is

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[27] *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1996 ed., s.v. "Smith, Uriah."

[28] Uriah Smith, *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Revelation* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1867); and idem, *Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Daniel* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1873).

[29] *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1996 ed., s.v. "Smith, Uriah."

[30] Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation: The Response of History to the Voice of Prophecy* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1897), 605.

[31] Ibid., 604.

[32] Uriah Smith, *Looking unto Jesus* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1897).

working in heaven now to bring humanity to a literal "at-one-ment" with him. In so defining, Smith found himself at odds with the dominant Calvinist thinking of his day that taught the atonement to have been completed at the cross. There does not seem to have been any doubt in Smith's mind that Christ's death was salvific and all-sufficient. Yet it was by the virtue of His blood that the only conditions of the atonement were met, and not that the atonement was completed. He would agree that Christ's life and death are redemptive but never atoning: "The death of Christ and the atonement *are not* the same thing."[33]

For Smith, true atonement (i.e., antitypical "at-one-ment" with God) could only begin on the antitypical Day of Atonement that commenced in 1844. Once the cross is recognized as the completion of the atonement, he reasoned, the only logical conclusion could be either "ultra Calvinism, fore-ordination and predestination in their most forbidding and unscriptural aspect"[34] (that since completion can only mean the sealing of everyone's fate—in this case, for the salvation of the elect) or Universalism (that all humanity will ultimately be saved). Fiercely Arminian in his soteriology, he rejected the Calvinist understanding on the ground that it robs free will from the individual and that it either limits salvation to the predestined elect or broadens it to all of humanity. Therefore, his uniquely Adventist understanding of the atonement led Smith to view the Calvinist teachings of the atonement as full of "errors"[35] and representing "an insurmountable problem."[36]

In summary, Smith's criticism of Calvin and Calvinism were two-fold. Like Andrews and Jones, he viewed Calvin's persecution of Servetus and other instances of persecution in the history of Calvinism as signs of the oppressive spirit of the end-time apostate religion. He also found the Calvinist theology of predestination clearly objectionable and totally incompatible with the Adventist teaching on the atonement. Since he, like many other Adventists, thought of the atonement as the heavenly work of Christ that commenced in 1844, Smith could not see the atonement as

[33] Ibid., 237. Italics in the original.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 240
[36] Ibid., 269.

having occurred and completed at the cross as Calvinists had understood it to be.

Ellen G. White

Among the four early Adventist leaders whose writings are the subjects of this study, Ellen White provides the most detailed and surprisingly positive picture of the life, teachings, and work of Calvin. In fact, nowhere in her writings can explicit criticism of Calvin's actions or theology be found.

The first reference to Calvin by White is found in *Spirit of Prophecy*, published in 1884. In a section where she addresses the line of biblical truth throughout Christian history, she writes: "Across the gulf of a hundred years, men stretched their hands to grasp the hands of the Lollards of the time of Wycliffe. Under Luther began the Reformation in Germany; Calvin preached the gospel in France,[37] Zwingle [sic] in Switzerland. The world was awakened from the slumber of ages, as from land to land were sounded the magic words, 'Religious Liberty.'"[38] This brief statement is the only reference to Calvin in the book. Whereas Luther receives an extensive treatment by White over four chapters and English reformers such as William Tyndale, John Knox, Nicholas Ridley, and Thomas Cranmer collectively receive a chapter, Calvin is not mentioned again. This is, nonetheless, a noteworthy "improvement" on *Spiritual Gifts*, the predecessor to the *Spirit of Prophecy* series, where only a single chapter is devoted to the Reformation and Luther is the sole reformer mentioned.[39]

White's uncommonly positive statement on Calvin stands in clear contrast to the way her Adventist contemporaries viewed the Genevan reformer. Whereas others saw Calvin as the prime example of religious

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[37] While Calvin's ministry extended well into France and he spent about three years as a pastor in Strasbourg, France, his work as a Protestant reformer was centered in Geneva in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. This reference may reflect White's partial understanding of history or a more generic, imprecise use of the word "France" to refer to French-speaking lands.

[38] Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1884), 93.

[39] See Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1 (Battle Creek, MI: James White, 1858), 119-122.

oppression by Protestantism, White lifts him up as a torchbearer of God's truth and champion of religious liberty.

When it comes to the historical followers of Calvin, however, White is not kind in her evaluation. She laments that the spirit of reform has declined in the Presbyterian churches. "It is a sad thing," she writes, "when a people claiming to be reformers cease to reform."[40] Such a bifurcated assessment—extolling Calvin but criticizing Calvinists—is fully fleshed out when White gives a fuller treatment in *Great Controversy*, the fifth book in the *Conflict of the Ages* series.

When she updated volume 4 of the *Spirit of Prophecy* series and re-published as *The Great Controversy* in 1888, White added a half-chapter length account of the life and ministry of Calvin as part of the larger Reformation narrative. This was retained essentially in the same format in the 1911 re-publication of the book. Once again, White shows great preference for Luther by allotting four chapters to him. Nonetheless, her treatment of Calvin is quite significant in that it provides a depiction of Calvin that is not found elsewhere in early Adventist literature.

Midway into the chapter entitled "The French Reformation," White introduces young Calvin as "a thoughtful, quiet youth, already giving evidence of a powerful and penetrating mind, and no less marked for the blamelessness of his life than for intellectual ardor and religious devotion."[41] Over the course of the next eighteen pages, White narrates some of the highlights of Calvin's life from Paris to Bourges, then back to Paris and finally to Geneva. Drawn heavily from the historical writings of J. H. Merle d'Aubigné,[42] James A. Wylie,[43] and W. Carlos Martyn,[44] White's account reflects the glowingly positive assessment of Calvin as pronounced by these authors. Throughout the chapter, Calvin is portrayed as being continuously led by God not only into safety from persecutor, but also toward greater light of divine truth.

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[40] Ibid., 185.

[41] Ibid., 219.

[42] J. H. Merle d'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation in Europe in the Time of Calvin*, 8 vols. (New York: Carter, 1866-1879).

[43] J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism* (London: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, n.d.).

[44] W. Carlos Martyn, *A History of the Huguenots* (New York: American Tract Society, 1866).

White's description of Calvin is particularly moving. When Calvin's cousin Olivetan introduced him to the "religion which is revealed in the Bible," the would-be reformer is described to have rejected it at first, but soon became engaged in "fruitless struggles" between his Catholic upbringing and the teachings of Protestantism for some time. This struggle continued until he witnessed the burning of a Protestant "heretic." Impressed by the peacefulness of the martyr, Calvin became determined to study the Bible and discover the same peace. Relying on Wylie and Martyn in this portion, White seems to imply a longer process of conversion than Calvin's own expression, "sudden conversion," suggests. After this conversion, White writes, "his words were as the dew falling to refresh the earth."[45]

After a narration of the trials of the Huguenots, White quickly brings Calvin to Geneva to that fateful meeting with Wiliam Farel who urged Calvin to stay and work to reform the city. White then describes the situation in Geneva and the evangelical need of the city as following: "Though Geneva had accepted the reformed faith, yet a great work remained to be accomplished here. It is not as communities but as individuals that men are converted to God; the work of regeneration must be wrought in the heart and conscience by the power of the Holy Spirit, not by the decrees of councils."[46] White characterizes Calvin as the very man to lead that work of reform and regeneration in Geneva. As did Farel, she sees "the hand of God" and "Providence" in the arrival of Calvin to Geneva.[47]

However, White makes the interesting decision to abbreviate Calvin's work in Geneva—the most significant features of his life from the perspective of the theme of *Great Controversy*—into one short, sweeping paragraph:

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[45] *The Great Controversy*, 221. White's analysis seems to be in keeping with Heiko Oberman's interpretation that Calvin's "subito conversione" did not necessarily mean "sudden" in the temporal sense, but "unexpected," referring to the unanticipated nature of the experience. Heiko Oberman, "Subita Conversio: The 'Conversion' of John Calvin," in *Reformiertes Erbe: Festschrift Fur Gottfried W. Locher Seinam 80 Geburtstag,* band 2, Heiko Oberman, Ernst Saxer, and Alfred Schindler, et al., eds. (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1993), 279-295.

[46] Ibid., 233.

[47] Ibid.

> For nearly thirty years Calvin labored at Geneva, first to establish there a church adhering to the morality of the Bible, and then for the advancement of the Reformation throughout Europe. *His course as a public leader was not faultless, nor were his doctrines free from error.* But he was instrumental in promulgating truths that were of special importance in his time, in maintaining the principles of Protestantism against the fast-returning tide of popery, and in promoting in the reformed churches simplicity and purity of life, in place of the pride and corruption fostered under the Romish teaching.[48]

In recognizing that Calvin "was not faultless" and that his theology was not "free from error," White clearly is acknowledging to her readers that she is aware of the sharp objections that her Adventist and other Protestant contemporaries were making to Calvin. But just as she does with Luther, White focuses on the positive contributions of Calvin and extols the virtues of his work in Geneva instead of criticizing him for his political and theological problems. This approach, of course, is in stark contrast to the assessments of Calvin given by other Adventist writers of her time. Her treatment of the reformer, in effect, goes against the sharply critical, one-sided portrayal of Calvin as a politico-theological despot that others make and provides a much-needed balance in assessing the legacy of Calvin.

In the closing paragraph of her narrative on the enigmatic reformer, she takes care to point out that Calvin's Geneva was primarily a "refuge for the hunted Reformers of all Western Europe," and that the "[s]tarving, wounded, bereft of home and kindred . . . were warmly welcomed and tenderly cared for . . . ."[49] To the end, Ellen White seems to be intent on putting Calvin in the best light possible by showing that, in spite of his failings, he was a true reformer used by God.

When it comes to Calvin's theological heirs, however, White takes a considerably more critical stance, as she did in *Spirit of Prophecy*. Several chapters later in *Great Controversy*, she provides assessment of the Protestant churches of her time by quoting from Daniel Neal's history of the Puritans:

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[48] Ibid. Italics supplied.
[49] Ibid.

> For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go at present no farther than the instruments of their reformation . . . the Calvinists, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things. This is a misery much to be lamented; for though they were burning and shining lights in their time, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God, but were they now living, would be as willing to embrace further light as that which they first received.[50]

In another section, White exposes what she perceives as yet another dangerous problem of the Reformed churches—their increasingly "conciliatory course" toward Catholicism. She warns that this move will ultimately cost them "the liberty of conscience which had been so dearly purchased."[51]

These criticisms notwithstanding, it is important to note that White does not make a wholesale condemnation of the modern heirs of Calvin. Her criticisms are not sharper than some of the counsels that she gives to fellow Adventists. There is always an underlying concern and appeal for reform. In this way, White's attitude is markedly different from other Adventist writers who seem to be occupied with polemics.

In summary, White is different from her contemporaries—Andrews, Jones and Smith—in that she makes an overall positive assessment of Calvin and represents his work in Geneva as a divinely-led reform which occupies an important place in the continuing line of God's truth. She is eager to acknowledge Adventism's debt to Calvin and to recognize his rightful place in the noble line of reformers—a far cry from Jones's charge that Calvin and his movement were part of the eschatological Babylon. Meanwhile, she is critical of the loss of the reform impulse among the modern followers of Calvin and the rapprochement between Protestantism and Catholicism. But her criticisms include hopeful appeals and warnings—calling for genuine, biblical reform among the heirs of Calvin.

Conclusions

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[50] Daniel Neal, *History of the Puritans*, vol. 1 (Portsmouth, NH: Charles Ewer, 1844), 269, as quoted in ibid., 292.

[51] *The Great Controversy*, 563.

For the most part, the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church held a negative view of John Calvin and Calvinist churches. Adventist pioneers came mostly from the Arminian-Methodist tradition and held strongly to the principle of separation of church and state. Having witnessed the exclusivist tendencies of the New England Puritan culture and having experienced harsh treatment by Calvinist-Puritans for their theological peculiarities, early Adventist leaders viewed Calvin's theocratic initiatives in Geneva and harsh discipline of dissidents as signs of moral failure and spiritual apostasy and the root cause of their nineteenth-century contemporaries' persecutory tendencies. They held that no true reform has a place for the unity of civil and ecclesiastical authorities. Thus, they condemned Calvin to the point of accusing him of becoming "popish" figure and a part of the Babylon of Rev 14. When they saw a movement to legislate religion in the Calvinist churches of their day, they were eager to point out that contemporary Calvinists were only following the tragic footsteps of their founder. Notable among those who held to these views were Andrews, Jones and Smith.

Smith added a theological dimension to the Adventist criticism of Calvinism. In his discussion of the atonement, he argued that the Calvinist teaching that the atonement was completed at the cross can only be valid if one accepted the Calvinist concept of predestination. Since Adventists and the rest of the Arminian world do not subscribe to the doctrine of predestination as taught in Calvinism, Smith asserted that it is wrong to say that the atonement was completed at cross. Then, he connected the Arminian doctrine of free will and atonement with the Adventist teaching of the investigative judgment. He argued that the cross was only a prerequisite of the post-1844, antitypical atonement taking place in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. Therefore, it would be erroneous to state, as the Calvinists do, that the atonement was completed at the cross.

Ellen White was a notable exception among early Adventists in her portrayal of Calvin and Calvinism. In what must have been a startling revelation, she portrays Calvin as a genuine and caring reformer. Her description of Calvin in Great Controversy is filled with praise and admiration for the reformer. By acknowledging the hand of God in the life and ministry of Calvin, White provided an important balance to the Adventist view of Calvin. Even when making criticisms of the Calvinists

of her day, White never used disparaging words but only lamented their decline and appealed to them to take up the reform that Calvin began.

In spite of the balance that White has brought to the Adventist view of Calvin and Calvinism, it appears that some in contemporary Adventism still have reservations about approaching the French Swiss reformer with congeniality and appreciation. Calvinism is still viewed with suspicion by many, and some even seem to believe that there is a Calvinist conspiracy to contaminate the historic Adventist faith.[52]

While Adventists should be ever vigilant in their protection of the integrity of their faith and beliefs, an overly negative attitude toward Calvin and Calvinism, or any other individual theologian or movement, does not seem fair, healthy, or necessary. White, in this regard, provides contemporary Adventism with an example of thoughtful appreciation of and qualified agreement with those of different theological persuasions and priorities.

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[52] See Crews, *The Calvinist Connection*.

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"Let No One Judge You": Col 2:16-17 in Exegetical Perspective

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Colossians 2:16-17 has been a bone of contention for scholars and theologians, resulting in a great variety of proposals for interpretation over the years.[1] This paper proposes to review the passage again, taking an exegetical approach to understanding the intent of the passage in its immediate and larger context. It should be noted at the outset that it is not the primary purpose of this study, as with many such studies of this passage, to argue the nature of the *sabbata* in 2:16, though we will address that issue somewhat in the course of the exegesis. The focus of this study is to try to address the question of what kinds of things no one should judge the readers with reference to, and why. The implications for theology and practice then are drawn out from the biblical exegesis of the passage in order to address the believer's proper relation to Christian standards and practices as it relates to this passage.

Paul's Purpose in the Epistle to the Colossians

In the first part of his epistle to the Colossians, Paul exalts the role and function of Jesus Christ above every other consideration ("all creation," "all things": 1:15-18) in order to establish the obligation of the believer to give Him first place in the life: "that in all things He may have the preeminence" (v. 18).[2] Paul continues to exalt Christ similarly as he moves through the subsequent discussion, showing how in Christ all the fullness of Deity dwells bodily (1:19; 2:9); how Christ has become the means of reconciliation and peace with God (1:20-22); and how God has made him (Paul) a steward and minister of the mystery of the gospel (1:23-29), which Paul defines as "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (1:27). In chap. 2 Paul

[1] There are too many to list here, but a number of the major studies will be referenced in the footnotes below at some appropriate point.

[2] All Scripture quotations in this paper are from the NKJV unless otherwise indicated.

expresses his great desire that his readers in both Colossae and Laodicea attain to a full understanding of this mystery (2:1-2) and become established in their faith in Christ (v. 5), "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (v. 3). Finally, Paul concludes this introduction with the imperative, "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving" (vv. 6-7).

However, Paul does not stop there. He knows that various deceptions will entice them with persuasive words (v. 4), and he warns against some very specific forms of deception: "Beware lest anyone cheat[3] you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (v. 8). It is Christ that should form the center of their belief and practices, not philosophy, human tradition, or worldly principles, "for in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (vv. 9-10).

Much research has been conducted on the nature of the "heresy" which Paul opposes in Colossae. Yet until now there is no firm conclusion regarding this matter, making it difficult to draw conclusions based on the nature of the heresy.[4] Charles Talbert, in his 2007 commentary, summarizes recent proposals under four basic camps, then concludes, "None of these four basic approaches commands a consensus at present. Questions remain."[5] It is not necessary to know precisely the nature of the 'heresy' in order to understand Paul's purpose, which is to oppose any false form of religion that involves knowledge or works with true religion,

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[3] The Greek expression here indicates one who will be a spoiler, carrying people away as captives (ὁ συλαγωγῶν), the same concept which later appears in v. 15.

[4] R. McL. Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon*, International Critical Commentary (London and New York: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 44, concludes his survey of the literature on the Colossian heresy by saying, "From this survey it will be clear that there is still no consensus on this question, beyond the general recognition mentioned at the beginning, that there are both Jewish and 'Gnostic' elements present in the 'philosophy'." Then after further considering various proposals he adds on p. 61, "The very variety of these proposals prompts to caution: we are not yet in a position to affirm with confidence that we have finally identified the nature and origins of the Colossian 'heresy'."

[5] Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 209. The four camps are that the heresy is (1) a mystery religion mixed with gnostic and Jewish elements; (2) a Jewish problem, either critical of Gentile Christian lifestyle or practicing a mystical asceticism; (3) a Greek philosophy of some sort; or (4) a syncretism of some sort, generally thought to combine Jewish, pagan, and philosophical ideas (206-209).

namely, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God.[6]

The Local Context of Colossians 2:16-17

In 2:11-15 Paul reminds his readers that they have been fully inducted into the body of Christ, the church (1:18), through baptism, which symbolized "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ," a "circumcision made without hands" (2:11), and that by baptism they "were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him [Christ] from the dead" (v. 12). Further, he adds that although they, as Gentiles, had previously been "dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh," they have been "made alive together with Him" and all their trespasses have been forgiven (v. 13).[7] This entrance by Gentiles into the new covenant experience of belonging to the household of faith and receiving acceptance and forgiveness was made possible by Christ's death on the cross, in which He "wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us" (v. 14).[8] By the "handwriting of requirements [χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν] that was against us," Paul makes reference to the Mosaic code[9] that drew a distinction between the covenant people of God, who were considered ritually clean and holy if they kept the ritual law, and the people of the nations, who were deemed unclean and unholy, since they did not keep the ritual law, thus excluding the latter from the

[6] We will analyze below the specifics of the various false forms of religion that Paul identifies in the passage. Whether they relate to Jewish or pagan forms of religion or philosophy, Paul takes the same approach to all of them. None of them have their foundation in Christ.

[7] Careful comparison with Eph 2:11-19, a parallel passage, makes clear that Paul was addressing Gentiles: "Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (vv. 11-13).

[8] By comparison with Paul's use of the first person plural in the parallel in Eph 2:14-18, it becomes evident that "us" here refers to both Jew and Gentile who were reconciled to God "in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity" and creating "one new man from the two, thus making peace" (vv. 15-16).

[9] Some want to see this as referring also to the Ten Commandments, but these were not in any sense a handwritten document (χειρόγραφον), nor did they have to do with regulations or ordinances (τοῖς δόγμασιν), and they did not distinguish Jews from Gentiles and create a barrier of hostility between them by including the one group while excluding the other as unclean. The purported grammatical connection between the forgiveness of sins and making alive in v. 13 and the wiping out of the χειρόγραφον in v. 14 is not strong enough to require that the latter is a reference to the other. The participle can be a mere temporal participle. Besides, forgiveness of sins was not provided for by annuling the moral law but rather by paying the penalty of the law.

congregation of Israel that worshiped God at His sanctuary.[10] The forgiveness of sins was made possible also by Christ's death on the cross (v. 13), at which, "having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it" (v. 15).[11] These "principalities [ἀρχάς: rulerships] and powers [ἐξουσίας: authorities]" are the same mentioned in Eph 6:12, namely, the powers of evil that dominate this present age and war against God and His people. Christ's victory over these powers at the cross gave Him the authority to take captives in His triumphal procession from among the spoils of the enemy (cf. Luke 11:21-22 par.; Isa 53:12; Eph 4:8; Heb 2:14-15).

Colossians 2:16-17

In 2:16-17 Paul concludes from this fact that his readers should let no one judge them in regard to those matters which pertain to the ritual law which, as has already been pointed out, was made void by Christ's sacrifice on the cross.[12] The ritual law consisted of types and ceremonies which foreshadowed the atoning work of Christ and had no more function after Christ came as the real Sacrifice, the Body to which the shadow points (v. 17). The book of Hebrews points to this same reality.

Hebrews 9 declares that the earthly tabernacle and its services was symbolic only, involving the offering of gifts and sacrifices it speaks of "a festival or a new moon or sabbaths." This has been one of the most misunderstood aspects of the passage.

The key to understanding this reference is unmistakably found in the OT texts to which it clearly alludes. Paul Giem has "which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience" (Heb 9:9). It was "concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation" (v. 10). In fact,

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[10] This is clearly Paul's point in the parallel passage in Eph 2:11-22, in which he uses very similar language (τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν) to describe how the Gentiles "who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ" (v. 13), since Christ "has broken down the middle wall of division" (v. 14), "the enmity," namely, "the law of commandments contained in ordinances" (v. 15), so "making peace," "that he might reconcile them both [Jew and Gentile, circumcised and uncircumcised (v. 11)] to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity" (vv. 15-16).

[11] Robert M. Royalty, "Dwelling on Visions: On the Nature of the So-called 'Colossian Heresy,'" *Biblica* 83 (2002): 355, says, "The language is primarily militaristic; θριαμβεύω suggests the triumphal procession of a Roman emperor and ἀπεκδύομαι means to disarm. Col 2, 9-15 climaxes with the militaristic image of God's defeat, through Christ, of all rulers and powers, earthly or heavenly. God's domination through Christ of the ἀρχάι [*sic*] καὶ ἐξουσίαι is a key notion in Colossians (Col 1,13.16; 2,10.15)."

[12] This is a summary statement that will be defended and justified below. One can see in this statement, however, that there is probable cause to understand that the opponents who would be doing the judging were likely, in part at least, of Jewish background, insisting, much like we see in Acts 15, that Gentile Christians practice the Jewish ritual law, among other things.

it was because of this inadequacy of the old ritual law to take away sins (10:4) that Christ, "the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death" provided "for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant" (9:15). "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect" (10:1). The parallels between the language of Col 2:16-17 and that of Heb 9,10 are too clear to be mistaken regarding the meaning.[13] Given the similar context, the food and drink—or eating and drinking (βρῶσις καὶ πόσις)—mentioned in Col 2:16 should probably be understood as essentially the same food and drink (βρῶμα καὶ πόμα) referred to in Heb 9:10.[14] If so, they do not refer to the daily eating and drinking of Paul's readers but to rituals involving food and drink that were associated with the old ritual law, "fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation."[15] The "shadows of coming things" in Col 2:17 are the same sacrifices and rituals of the sanctuary which pertain to that ritual law which is "a shadow of the good things to come" in Heb 10:1.[16] It remains only to determine to what Col 2:16 refers when done a fairly thorough study in this area for the purpose of trying to understand the nature of the sabbaths mentioned in Col 2:16.[17] The present study has a broader interest in this reference, not to merely discuss the nature of the sabbaths (σαββάτων)[18] but to understand

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[13] Paul Giem, "Sabbatōn in Col 2:16," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 19 (1981): 208-9, and H. Ross Cole, "The Christian and Time-Keeping in Colossians 2:16 and Galatians 4:10," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 39 (2001): 275-77, note some, though not all, of these parallels.

[14] Interestingly, Giem does not seem to see this connection. He argues that "βρῶσις καὶ πόσις is probably a gnostic rather than an OT phrase" (208). Norman H. Young, "Romans 14:5-6 and Colossians 2:16 in Social Context," paper presented to the Biblical Research Institute Committee at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, October 22-23, 2007, 18, on the other hand, argues that within the context of Col 2:16 they refer to communal meals on festival days.

[15] See Exod 29:40-41; Lev 23:18,37; Num 6:15,17; 15:4-7; 28:5,7-10,12-14, 24; 29:6,11, 16,18,19,21,22,24,25,27,28,30,31,33,34,37-39; 2 Kgs 16:13,15; Ezek 45:17; Joel 1:9,13; 2:14. These offerings generally involved eating the items which were offered. The priests ate from some of the offerings, and the people ate from other of the offerings. See Lev 10:12-19; Num 8:8-14; Deut 12:17-27; Ezek 42:13; 44:29.

[16] Giem, 208, correctly observes that σκιά has "a pointing or foreshadowing function" in the context of Heb 8:5 and 10:1, "and there is no reason why in Col 2:17 σκιά should not be understood in the same way." "In Heb 8:5 σκιᾷ is parallel with ὑποδείγματι" (ibid.), where both refer to the OT sanctuary as "the copy and shadow of the heavenly things."

[17] Giem, 198-202. See also Young, 15-17.

[18] Why Giem treats this as a singular noun rather than as the genitive plural that it is, he does not explain (Giem, 198), but Ron du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can't Be Found in Colossians 2:16* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2008), 35-36, attempts to explain that σαββάτα (from which σαββάτων derives) has been shown to be either singular (when taken over as a loanword from Aramaic) or plural (of σάββατον), and he prefers to take it as singular, in agreement with ἑορτῆς and νεομηνίας. Ultimately, it may not make much difference, since the LXX of background texts uses the singular as

the allusion that seems to be inherent in the whole list of things for which Paul's readers were not to allow others to judge them,[19] then to understand the reference in the larger context of Paul's whole discussion in the epistle. Interestingly, the three elements found in Col 2:16 appear together in the same context—and in the same sequence—in Ezek 45:17:

> "Then it shall be the prince's part to give burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings, at the **feasts**, the **New Moons**, the **Sabbaths**, and at all the appointed seasons of the house of Israel."[20]

It is clear from this passage that the feasts, new moons, and sabbaths were the times when these various offerings were to be made. It is interesting also that grain (food) and drink offerings are included along with burnt offerings, sin offerings, and peace offerings. The focus is on ritual offerings made on special days. In order to see that this is not just a coincidental arrangement of references to these elements from Col 2:16, we need to look at the broader evidence available. Giem observes that the most important parallel, the one after which most of the others are modeled, is Num 28-29. It is not feasible to quote the whole passage, but 28:9-10 presents the burnt offerings, grain offering, and drink offering for the (weekly) Sabbath; 28:11-15 presents the burnt offering, grain offering, drink offering, and sin offering for "the beginnings of your months," or new moon festivals (LXX: ἐν ταῖς νεομηνίαις); and 28:16–29:40 presents the burnt offerings, grain offerings, drink offerings, sin offerings, and peace offerings for the various annual festivals.

Following is a series of references to the same three elements, demonstrating the intentional relationship between them. Although they vary in the sequence in which they are mentioned, Young points out that

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well as the plural.

[19] The nature of the sabbaths themselves will be shown to be not essential to the larger discussion in light of the exegetical study of the verse as a whole and specifically of the OT backgrounds being alluded to here; therefore, this study does not attempt to discuss the nature of these days, though the OT backgrounds suggest that they refer to weekly sabbaths along with the daily, monthly, and annual ceremonies when burnt offerings were offered, as shown below. Cf. Giem, 206, 209, and Young, 17.

[20] Words in bold are my own emphasis to highlight the elements from Col 2:16. The LXX lists the offerings in Ezek 45:17 as τὰ ὁλοκαυτώματα καὶ αἱ θυσίαι καὶ αἱ σπονδαὶ ἔσονται ἐν ταῖς ἑορταῖς καὶ ἐν ταῖς νουμηνίαις καὶ ἐν τοῖς σαββάτοις καὶ ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἑορταῖς οἴκου Ισραηλ. Du Preez, 63, argues that this passage is not relevant as a background to Col 2:16 because there is no clear calendar sequence here, since it begins with the daily, moves to the yearly, monthly, and weekly, then back to the yearly again. He also argues that here the festivals and new moons are plural, whereas they are singular in Col 2:16 (66), and also that Paul did not quote from Ezekiel in his epistles (102), so Ezek 45 cannot be background for Co1 2:16. He is very uncomfortable with any purported background that ties into the weekly Sabbath.

these variations have no significance relative to the meaning.[21] It is important to note the explicit connection to the regular burnt offering in each of these except Hos 2:11.[22]

> Neh 10:32-33: Also we made ordinances for ourselves, to exact from ourselves yearly one-third of a shekel for the service of the house of our God: for the showbread, for the regular grain offering, for the regular burnt offering of the **Sabbaths**, the **New Moons**, and the set **feasts**; for the holy things, for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and all the work of the house of our God.[23]
>
> Hos 2:11: I will also cause all her mirth to cease, / Her **feast days**, / Her **New Moons**, / Her **Sabbaths**— / All her appointed feasts.[24]
>
> 1 Chr 23:30-31: And to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD, and likewise at even; and at every presentation of a burnt offering to the LORD on the **Sabbaths** and on the **New Moons** and on the set **feasts**, by number according to the ordinance governing them, regularly before the LORD.[25]
>
> 2 Chr 2:4: Behold, I am building a temple for the name of the LORD my God, to dedicate it to Him, to burn before Him sweet incense, for the continual showbread, for the burnt offerings morning and evening,

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[21] Young, 16.

[22] Contra du Preez, 106, I find implicit allusions in the context of Hos 2:11 to sacrifices and offerings. By way of contrast with what Israel should be doing on these days, as instructed in the other passages, she is committing spiritual adultery by burning incense to the Baal idols on the festival days (2:13) and offering raisin cakes to idols (3:1 NET). Therefore, they must live many days without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim (3:4). Afterward they will turn and seek the Lord their God (3:5). This is what God is referring to when He says in 2:11 that He "will put an end to all her celebrations: her annual religious festivals, monthly new moon celebrations, and weekly Sabbath festivities—all her appointed festivals" (NET). The parallel set of festival days also suggests that the same daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly days for celebration and offering of sacrifices is in view, even if the sequence is not always consistent. For du Preez to argue that "not even one" of the other texts "has been found to contain any such logical progression" as a calendar sequence, in either direction (66), does not match the evidence.

[23] The LXX of v. 33 (2 Esdr 20:34) has (in part) εἰς ὁλοκαύτωμα τοῦ ἐνδελεχισμοῦ τῶν σαββάτων τῶν νουμηνιῶν εἰς τὰς ἑορτὰς.

[24] The LXX (Hos 2:13) has καὶ ἀποστρέψω πάσας τὰς εὐφροσύνας αὐτῆς ἑορτὰς αὐτῆς καὶ τὰς νουμηνίας αὐτῆς καὶ τὰ σάββατα αὐτῆς καὶ πάσας τὰς πανηγύρεις αὐτῆς. Note how the three are summarized together as "all her appointed feasts" (πανηγύρεις: festal gatherings).

[25] The LXX of v. 31 reads, καὶ ἐπὶ πάντων τῶν ἀναφερομένων ὁλοκαυτωμάτων τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν τοῖς σαββάτοις καὶ ἐν ταῖς νεομηνίαις καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἑορταῖς κατὰ ἀριθμὸν κατὰ τὴν κρίσιν ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς διὰ παντὸς τῷ κυρίῳ.

> on the **Sabbaths**, on the **New Moons**, and on the set **feasts** of the LORD our God. This is an ordinance forever to Israel.[26]
>
> 2 Chr 8:12-13: Then Solomon offered burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of the LORD which he had built before the vestibule, according to the daily rate, offering according to the commandment of Moses, for the **Sabbaths**, the **New Moons**, and the three appointed yearly **feasts**—the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles.[27]
>
> 2 Chr 31:3: The king also appointed a portion of his possessions for the burnt offerings: for the morning and evening burnt offerings, the burnt offerings for the **Sabbaths** and the **New Moons** and the set **feasts**, as it is written in the Law of the LORD.[28]

There are other passages as well, such as Isa 1:13-14,[29] which refer to these same elements. All of these parallel OT passages serve to provide a precedent for understanding Paul's use of the expression "a festival or a new moon or sabbaths" in Col 2:16 to be an obvious reference to the burnt offerings which were offered at weekly, monthly, and yearly celebrations, in addition to the daily burnt offerings which were offered in the temple according to the Mosaic ritual law. The concern is not with the festivals, new moon celebrations, or sabbaths *themselves* but with the ritual offerings which were offered on those days, the one thing that three all have in common when grouped in the same context.[30] The days and festivals

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[26] The LXX of the last part of the verse (v. 3 in the LXX) reads, καὶ τοῦ ἀναφέρειν ὁλοκαυτώματα διὰ παντὸς τὸ πρωὶ καὶ τὸ δείλης καὶ ἐν τοῖς σαββάτοις καὶ ἐν ταῖς νουμηνίαις καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἑορταῖς τοῦ κυρίου θεοῦ ἡμῶν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦτο ἐπὶ τὸν Ισραηλ.

[27] The LXX of v. 13 reads, καὶ κατὰ τὸν λόγον ἡμέρας ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ ἀναφέρειν κατὰ τὰς ἐντολὰς Μωυσῆ ἐν τοῖς σαββάτοις καὶ ἐν τοῖς μησὶν καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἑορταῖς τρεῖς καιροὺς τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ τῶν ἀζύμων καὶ ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ τῶν ἑβδομάδων καὶ ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ τῶν σκηνῶν. It is notable that the feasts are here identified as the three appointed yearly feasts, the pilgrim festivals which are then named. Also, in this text the LXX uses μησίν (months) instead of νεομηνίαις (new moons), though there does not seem to be any significance to the difference.

[28] LXX: αἱ μερὶς τοῦ βασιλέως ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς ὁλοκαυτώσεις τὴν πρωινὴν καὶ τὴν δειλινὴν καὶ ὁλοκαυτώσεις εἰς σάββατα καὶ εἰς τὰς νουμηνίας καὶ εἰς τὰς ἑορτὰς τὰς γεγραμμένας ἐν τῷ νόμῳ κυρίου.

[29] Besides these passages, Giem, 200-6, and Young, 15-16, point to parallels also in the apocryphal and extrabiblical literature, such as 1 Esdr 5:51 LXX; 1 Macc 10:34; Jdt 8:6; 1 QM 2.4-6; Jub 6:34-38; etc., but several are not in the context of burnt offerings like the OT texts, though some are.

[30] This was also the conclusion of Giem, 206, 209. Du Preez, 63, 66, 106, contests this, asserting that Col 2:16 refers only to the days or festivals themselves, since no ritual activity is mentioned in the text. However, we have seen in note 22 above that sacrifices may be

themselves were not necessarily shadows of coming things—of Christ—but the ritual offerings made on those days certainly were. Others have pointed out that the weekly Sabbaths were memorials of creation (Gen 2:2-3; Exod 20:11; 31:17; Mark 2:27) rather than shadows pointing forward to Christ, that they were not tied to the sanctuary ritual.[31] The new moons likewise were celebrations not directly related to the sanctuary ritual and did not function as types or shadows of Christ and His sacrifice.[32]

The food and drink, or eating and drinking, in the same context, clearly seem to refer to ceremonial eating and drinking in connection with the rituals, such as at the Passover meal.[33] This is made apparent by v. 17, which says that these things (ἅ) are a shadow of coming things,[34] whereas, the body (σῶμα) to which the shadow points is that of Christ.[35] When the reality came to which the shadow pointed, the old rituals were no longer necessary. That is why Paul counseled his readers to let no one judge them in regard to practice of these old rituals. The Jerusalem Council had already rendered a decision regarding these matters (Acts 15:19-29). The

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implied, though not explicit, in the parallel passage he has cited from Hos 2:11, though he argues that they are not intended there either (106). I contend from the OT parallels that these are implicit, and the mention of these things as "a shadow [or foreshadowing] of things to come," referring to Christ, makes this reasonably evident. The weekly Sabbath was never viewed in Scripture as a foreshadowing of Christ, so it must be, rather, the burnt offering offered on the Sabbath which is a foreshadowing of Christ's sacrifice. The parallel mention of other ceremonial aspects makes evident that whatever is being stated regarding the Sabbath here is a ceremonial aspect, just as described also in Heb 9:9-10, which lists things imposed only "until the time of reformation."

[31] Cole, 277-78; Giem, 208-9.

[32] Isa 66:18 prophetically presents both the weekly Sabbath and the new moon (monthly) celebration as continuing to function as regular worship opportunities even in the new earth, showing that it was not God's intention that the days themselves be discontinued for worship but only the ceremonial activities held on those days that pointed forward to the coming of Messiah.

[33] See note 15 above.

[34] Giem, 207-8, states that the grammar does not require that βρῶσις καὶ πόσις be referred to by ἅ, but Young, 19, argues in favor of ἅ as "more probably a generalizing neuter referring to all of the elements mentioned in v. 16. . . . The eating or the drinking and the festive days should not be seen as separate from one another." Cole, 277, points out that Troy Martin's proposed translation of v. 17, "but [let everyone discern] the body of Christ" (Troy Martin, "'But Let Everyone Discern the Body of Christ' (Colossians 2:17)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114 (1995): 252-54), ignores the fact that σκιὰ τῶν μελλόντων is pejorative, as shown by a comparative study of Col 2:17 and Heb 10:1.

[35] Every shadow points to the reality from which it derives, which is why 2:17 calls it "a shadow of coming things," and the sacrificial body of Christ is that reality. C. F. D. Moule, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 103, suggests that the "body" referred to here, to which the shadow (the sacrificial system) pointed, may be the body of Christ offered in sacrifice as quoted from Ps 40:7 by Heb 10:5: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, / But a body You have prepared for Me." See also Heb 10:10.

gospel was to be centered now in Christ and His atoning work, not in keeping of the old rituals, which were merely shadows pointing forward to Christ.

The Subsequent Context

Paul continues his counsel to the Colossian Christians in 2:18-23 with further warnings against letting anyone disqualify them for their reward through attitudes and practices which are characterized in v. 19 as "not holding fast to the Head [Christ], from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase which is from God." The attitudes and practices mentioned in v. 18 include ascetic self-abasement,[36] worship of angels,[37] expounding on visions,[38] and being groundlessly conceited by a mind fixed on carnal things.[39] Paul challenges his readers in vv. 20-22 to ponder their own actions: "Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—'Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,'[40] which all concern things which perish with the

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[36] The adjective "false" has been added to the text in the NKJV and the NIV. This is not necessary. The KJV uses the word "voluntary," which seems a reasonable translation in view of θέλων, but Murray J. Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 120, sees it possibly as a Septuagintalism meaning "delighting Paul's readers are submitting themselves according to the commandments and doctrines of men, not according to the commandment of God or of Christ. In fact, it is implied in v. 20 that these regulations in"(cf. NKJV). The word ταπεινοφροσύνῃ (self-abasement, humility, modesty, being lowly-minded) is used not only here but also in v. 23. This may refer to self-mortification as an act of asceticism or self-imposed piety, as suggested by the adjacent use of ἐθελοθρησκίᾳ (self-made religion or self-imposed piety) in v. 23. See Royalty, 346, 349-50.

[37] There is a diversity of opinion about what θρησκείᾳ τῶν ἀγγέλων means. θρησκεία refers to the practice of religion, religious service, or cult. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BAGD), ed. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 2d ed., rev. and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (1979), s.v. "θρησκεία," states that the being who is worshiped is given in the objective genitive, as here in 2:18. This would imply that angels are actually the objects of worship on the part of those who would attempt to defraud Paul's readers of their reward. Harris, 121, concludes, "What Paul is countering here is not Christian humility but that parade of misguided, false humility or self-humiliation that imagines that God is so holy that he is accessible only through angelic mediation." Royalty, 350, however, prefers a subjective genitive.

[38] The use of ἐμβατεύων is vague, since it appears only here in the literature of the period, according to BAGD, s.v. "ἐμβατεύω." However, it seems to be used elsewhere in other periods but in similar contexts of entering into a subject either for investigation or for describing the experience in some detail. "Visions" comes from ἃ ἑόρακεν, literally, "what things he has seen."

[39] See BAGD, s.v. "νοῦς."

[40] Ralph P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox, 1991), 119, observes, "'Do not handle' may be a term for curing the human libido," perhaps suggesting sexual celibacy.

using— according to the commandments and doctrines of men?" It is vital to note here that Paul identifies the kinds of regulations to which his readers were subjecting themselves. (1) They are stated as prohibitions, things to abstain from, and they involve the senses—touching, tasting, handling. (2) They are regulations to which the readers have elected to submit themselves,[41] and they are the same kind of regulations (δόγματα) as those abolished by the death of Christ according to v. 14. (3) The regulations all concern things which perish with the using. (4) Paul's readers are submitting themselves according to the commandments and doctrines of men, not according to the commandment of God or of Christ. In fact, it is implied in v. 20 that these regulations have to do with the basic principles of the world to which the readers have died with Christ through baptism (vv. 12-13). The basic principles (στοιχεῖα)[42] of the world were already paired in v. 8 with "the tradition of men" and were contrasted with Christ, so the association with the regulations here in v. 20 is in harmony with that negative assessment. Paul completes his assessment of the regulations in v. 23: "These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect[43] of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh." Self-imposed piety, self-abasement, and ascetic self-abuse characterized the practice of the regulations to which they were submitting themselves, but Paul declares that, although the practice of this form of religion may have had an appearance of wisdom, it was powerless to prevent indulgence of the flesh. In other words, the very thing it purported to guard against, it was unable to prevent. The reason was because it was purely a human effort, and Christ had no real role.

Paul continues, then, in 3:1-5 to challenge his readers to maintain a new life in Christ:

> If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

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[41] The use of the middle voice of δογματίζω signifies placing oneself under the authority of the regulation (BAGD, s.v. "δογματίζω").

[42] The term στοιχεῖα is used in a number of places in the NT to refer to essential elements, elemental substances, or fundamental principles. Cf. Gal 4:3,9; Heb 5:12; 2 Pet 3:10,12.

[43] The Greek word ἀφειδίᾳ signifies more than mere neglect. It implies harsh treatment. Harris, 131-32, says that "ἀφειδίᾳ σώματος may be a periphrasis for 'asceticism.'"

This final list of things to put to death in the flesh does not consist of more self-imposed human regulations. Rather, it represents those things that one dies to when one comes to Christ. Christ, not a set of regulations, must be at the center of the consciousness and the motives for one who has been raised with Christ to a new life. "Set your mind on things above" is already defined in the previous verse when it states, "Seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God." The mind of the one whose life is hidden with Christ in God takes on a new focus, directing attention to Christ seated at God's right hand. He has all power and authority to convey to the soul that needs to be set free from the desires of the flesh. Only in Christ can one overcome the indulgence of the flesh. Self-imposed piety, self-mortification, and ascetic abuse of the body, including regulations such as "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," have no power to prevent indulgence of the flesh.

In addition, Paul enumerates other things which his readers need to put off: "anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth" (3:8). He goes on to add, "Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (vv. 9-10). He concludes v. 11 by stating, "But Christ is all and in all." None of these things is possible apart from Christ being all and in all for the believer.

In 3:12-14 Paul proceeds to list those things which the Christian should put on: "tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind,[44] meekness, longsuffering; bearing one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection." Most of these are not things one does, but the kind of character one takes on in modeling the perfect, exemplary character of Christ. Verses 15-16 continue to enumerate the changes that take place in the life of the person whose life is hidden with Christ in God: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, . . . and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Christ's word dwelling in the heart produces gratitude and a joy that is communicated to others in songs of praise to God.

Finally, Paul concludes the section by summarizing in v. 17, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." The name of Jesus as Lord

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[44] The term is the same one (ταπεινοφροσύνη) used pejoratively in 2:18,23, but here the context makes clear that this is a positive character trait, not a questionable practice following useless regulations of self-imposed piety. The key difference is how one gains this character.

is powerful, and whatever is said or done in His name will redound in thanksgiving to God, for there will be none of self to get in the way.

Implications for Theology and Practice

The Epistle to the Colossians is rightly regarded as a work of great Christological importance. As we have seen, Christ is presented as the center of theology and practice. "He is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation" (1:15). "All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist" (1:16b-17). In Him "we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (1:14). "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (1:18). In Him "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:3). "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (2:9-10). "In Him you were also circumcised . . . by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (2:11-12). At the cross, "having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it" (2:15). This portrait of the centrality and supremacy of Christ in the life of the world and of the church, and in the triumph over sin and death, forms the basis for the admonition of Paul in 2:16-17, "Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."

It has been shown conclusively that the elements mentioned in 2:16 are things that pertained to the ritual law which was a shadow pointing forward to the sacrifice of Christ's body on the cross and which was therefore "taken out of the way" (v. 14). Christ effectually nailed the ritual law to the cross, so putting an end to the distinctions between Jews and Gentiles and paving the way for the spread of the gospel to all the world through faith in Christ as opposed to coming to God through the sanctuary and its rituals. Neither Jewish nor Gentile Christians could any more be judged based on the old ritual law and its distinctions and practices. Christ brought in a new means of access to God. Instead of the old circumcision made with human hands, baptism represented a new "circumcision made without hands," namely, "the circumcision of Christ," accomplished "by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh" (2:11-12). Gentiles no longer had to be circumcised and perform the ritual law to be able to come into the presence of God and feel accepted by Him. Now, through baptism, they were raised with Christ "through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead," and they were "made alive together with Him," having been forgiven all their trespasses (2:12-13). The handwritten law of ritual regulations which was against them was wiped out and taken out of the way (2:14).

Not only were the old Jewish regulations no longer to stand in their way and allow others to judge them by it, but they needed to be set free from the ascetic concerns and practices of some who felt that they could subdue the desires of the flesh through rules such as "Do not touch, do not taste, and do not handle," through self-imposed piety consisting of rules of self-abnegation and physically punishing the body. These were humanly devised methods that did not result in achieving either control of fleshly desires or peace with God (2:20-23). The only solution for the believer is to "seek those things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God" (3:1). If the reader will keep his or her focus on Christ and His exemplary character, power, and intercessory work at the right hand of God, the mind and character will be transformed into the image of the One who "is the image of the invisible God" (1:15). The believer will not set his or her mind on things on the earth but on things above (3:2) . They will put off the things that are unrepresentative of the character of Christ, but will put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, and love instead (3:12-14). They will forgive as Christ has forgiven them (3:13). Whatever they do in word or deed, they will do all in the name of Jesus their Lord, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (3:17). Christ will be at the center of their thoughts and motives. This is Paul's central message to the church at Colossae.

What does this say about the relation of the believer to Christian standards of conduct? Does Col 2:16-17 justify the believer in ignoring Christian standards? Just as with the rituals and regulations that Paul and his readers were dealing with in the Epistle to the Colossians, apart from a Christ-centered approach to character development, regulations and standards become meaningless, for they detract from the very object to which they should be focusing attention, namely, Christ, and they are powerless to change the heart and prevent indulgence of the carnal desires. However, if Christ is first in the heart and the affections, and the focus is kept on Christ, the true Christian will choose to put off the old ways to which he or she died in baptism and put on new ways which reflect the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22-23). There will be an emphasis on the principles of the gospel of Christ rather than on standards of behavior in the form of rituals and regulations. This does not mean that standards are done away with any more than Christ's abrogation of the ritual law did away with the principles and standards of the moral law, but there will be a change of focus. The principles of the moral law, which form the standard of Christian character, are now written by Christ on the heart and mind (cf. Heb 8:10), and there is a desire on the part of the believer to live out the life of Christ in patterns of Christlike behavior (cf. 1 John 2:6; 3:2-3). Rather than adhering to self-imposed external rules and regulations, the Christian uses the standard of Christ's life as the measuring rod against which to evaluate his or her own patterns of thought and behavior. Instead of living up to the expectations of others, as in Col 2, the individual Christian

focuses the attention upon Christ and attempts to reflect as clearly as possible that standard of life and character. Thus no one can judge the Christian believer by any external norms, but Christ will judge the life by the devotion one has to Him and to attempts to emulate His character. This truly frees the believer to have peace with God and with others, outflowing with expressions of gratitude and joy.

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Paul and Revelation 14

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The purpose of this essay is to determine whether there is an exegetical basis for Ellen G. White's statement that justification by faith is the third angel's message "in verity."[1] This essay will address only this concern, and all other concerns, pressing and tempting as they may be, will go unaddressed.

There are three main sections to this essay. The first section compares Rev 14:6-12 and Rom 1. This investigation seeks to determine whether there is an intertextual relationship between Rev 14 and Rom 1. The reason for choosing Romans 1 is twofold. Romans is Paul's most lucid presentation of justification by faith. Also, there are significant verbal correlations between Rev 14 and Rom 1 that call for investigation. In the second section, I will examine Rom 2 as a test case to see whether the concept of the gospel in Rev 14 coincides with the concept of the gospel in Romans. Romans 2 is ideal for this purpose because it contains the most complete discussion of law and judgment in the entire Pauline corpus. In the final section, I will seek to clarify the role of faith, law, and judgment in Paul's thinking based on passages taken from Rom 4, 6, 7, and 14. I will

[1] E. G. White, "Repentance the Gift of God," *Review and Herald*, 1 April, 1890, 193. Eric Claude Webster, "Damnation or Deliverance," *Ministry*, February, 1988, 37-40, appears to be the only serious attempt to explain the relation between the two. Webster argues that the Sabbath, which is the opposite of the mark of the beast in Rev 14, is the sign of the sanctification that results from justification by faith. Webster does not offer detailed exegesis to support his views.

conclude by answering possible objections to my thesis. Finally, due to space, discussion of secondary literature will be kept to a minimum.

Romans 1:14-32 and Revelation 14:6-12

One might not suspect that Revelation and Romans could have much in common. In his commentary on Revelation, David Aune states that the word *gospel* in Rev 14:6 has "no semantic connections to Pauline usage."[2] Martin Luther considered Revelation "neither apostolic nor prophetic."[3] Indeed, for many, Revelation is a book filled with exotic imagery, symbolism, and numbers that evoke wild speculations. It is also a book full of threats of hellfire and brimstone and of curses that are poured out without mercy upon the inhabitants of the earth to their great devastation. By contrast, Romans is a clear expression of the joyous gospel, full of grace and forgiveness. For example, Romans does not once mention the word "curse" in its discussion of the history of Israel's apostasy in chs. 9-11.

A careful look, however, reveals that there is a closer affinity between Romans and Revelation than meets one at first glance. To begin with, both letters have a strong Roman connection. Revelation was sent to the seven churches on the western coast of Asia Minor facing persecution from Rome. Romans was directly sent to Rome, where nascent Christianity was struggling to take root. In other words, both letters address early Christian communities struggling to survive in the hostile environment of the Empire. More importantly, significant verbal parallels exist between Romans and Revelation. For this essay, we will limit our comparisons to Rom 1:14-32 and Rev 14:6-12. The first parallel concerns the universalism of the gospel. Rom 1:15-17 states: "I am eager to *preach the gospel* (εὐαγγελίσασθαι) to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to *every one* (παντί) who has faith."[4] The two words in this passage that capture the universalism of Paul's gospel are παντί (*every*) and εὐαγγελίζω (*preach the gospel*). The same two words

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[2] David Edward Aune, *Revelation*, 3 vols., Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52 a (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1998), 825.

[3] Quoted in Werner Georg Kümmel and Paul Feine, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. H. C. Kee, Rev. ed. (Nashville, TN.: Abingdon Press, 1975), 471.

[4] All quotations are from the RSV unless otherwise indicated. The italics appearing within scriptural quotations are all mine, unless otherwise indicated.

appear in Rev 14:6, also denoting the universalism of the gospel.[5] The eternal gospel (εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον)[6] is to be *preached* (εὐαγγελίσαι) "to *every* (ἐπὶ πᾶν) nation and tribe and tongue and people." Another eye-catching parallel is the expression *the wrath of God*. In Rom 1:18, the expression ὀργὴ θεοῦ (the wrath of God) describes the wrath of God being revealed from heaven against the wicked (᾽αποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργὴ θεοῦ ἀπ᾽ οὐρανοῦ).[7] A virtually identical phrase appears in Revelation 14:10, warning deluded humans about the wrath of God (αὐτὸς πίεται . . . τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ). And both Rev 14 and Rom 1 describe the wrath in the context of idolatry. Romans 1:23 denounces those who exchange the glory of God for *images* of mortal creatures (ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνος). Revelation 14:9-11 likewise pronounces the wrath of God upon those who worship the beast and its image (εἴ τις προσκυνεῖ . . . τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ). Moreover, both Rev 14 and Rom 1 directly link idolatry with immorality. In Rom 1:24-31, immorality and vices are the direct result of idolatry. In Revelation 14:8, the wine of the idolatry of Babylon is its immorality (τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας).[8] These parallels suggest that Revelation 14 is dependent on Romans 1 for its language of judgment.

The unusually large number of occurrences of the term *wrath* (ὀργή) in Romans and Revelation are yet another indication of literary dependence. The term ὀργή occurs 36 times in the New Testament. Of these, 21 occurrences are in Paul, and the majority of them (12 times) are in Romans (1:18; 2:5 [2×], 8; 3:5; 4:15; 5:9; 9:22 [2×]; 12:19; 13:4; 13:5). In other words, Paul speaks about the wrath of God more than any other New Testament writer, and fully one third of the occurrences of ὀργή are found

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[5] Aune, 827; see also Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 239-243.

[6] For the purpose of this essay, the anarthrous state of εὐαγγέλιον is not critical because there are many other parallels besides this one (cf. Aune, 825). The missing article may simply be due to faulty Greek. Concerning the Greek of Revelation, C. F. D. Moule remarks: "the author of the Apocalypse, who writes like a person who, nurtured in a Semiticspeech, is only just learning to write in Greek"; C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1960), 3.

[7] The term "anger (θύμος)" expressing God's wrath (ὀργή) occurs in Rev 14:8, 10, 19, and it also occurs in the same sense in Rom 2:8.

[8] Aune, 831: "τοῦ οἴνου, 'wine,' is a partitive genitive, τοῦ θυμοῦ, 'passions,' 'appetite,' is an appositive or epexegetical genitive." In other words, the wine is the passion (cf. 17:2).

in Romans.[9] Remarkably, Revelation has the next largest occurrence of the term in the NT—six times (6:16, 17; 11:18; 14:10; 16:9; 19:15). If we add the verb ὀργίζομαι (to be angry), which does not occur in Paul, to the list (Rev 11:18; 12:17), then the total occurrences of "wrath" in Revelation come to eight. One asks: Is it possible that Paul's gospel is the source of the language and concept of "the wrath of God" in Revelation? The answer is yes.

This is further evident from the way Rom 1 and Rev 14 use the term glory (δόξα; *doxa* henceforth). Both chapters use *doxa* to underscore the importance of renouncing idolatry and of recognizing God as the sole Creator of the world. Romans 1:21-23 condemns the human refusal to *give glory* to Creator God (οὐχ ὡς θεὸν ἐδόξασαν) and the resultant idolatry that exchanges the glory of God for images resembling creatures (ἤλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνος). Similarly, Revelation 14:7-10 calls upon humans to *give glory* to God (δότε αὐτῷ δόξαν) and to avoid the image of the beast—in other words, to renounce idolatry. In Jewish monotheism, the worship of Creator God and the rejection of idolatry are, as it were, the two sides of the same coin, and it appears that Rev 14:7-10 is the obverse of Rom 1:18-23: Romans 1 denounces idolatry, and Revelation 14 extols the worship of Creator God. What needs to be noted here, however, is that *doxa* is a theological theme bearing Paul's own unique stamp. As Robert W. Yarborough rightly notes, the noun δόξα occurs 77 times in Paul and figures very prominently in his theology.[10]

One particularly interesting occurrence of a Pauline term in Revelation is the word *mind* (νοῦς). Except for its one occurrence in Luke 24:45, the Greek word νοῦς (*nous* henceforth) occurs in the NT only in Paul and

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[9] Not all the occurrences of ὀργή (*wrath*) in Paul refer to the wrath of God (Eph 4:31; Col 3:8; 1 Tim 2:8). Although Rom 12:19; 13:4; 13:5 do not directly refer to the wrath of God, one cannot preclude this possibility. Even when one removes these six occurrences from the count, Paul is still the most frequent user of ὀργή in relation to divine judgment.

[10] Robert W. Yarbrough, "Paul and Salvation History," *Justification and Variegated Nomism: The Paradoxes of Paul*, ed. D. A. Carson et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 322-324; Yarbrough also notes that glory is a neglected theme in Pauline scholarship. Jacob Jervell's definition according to which the glory of God in Paul refers only to the divine image in humans is too narrow; see Jacob Jervell, *Imago Dei. Gen 1, 26 f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den Paulinischen Briefen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 320, 325.

Revelation. It occurs a whopping 21 times in Paul (Rom 1:28; 7:23, 25. 11:34; 12:2; 14:5; 1 Cor 1:10; 2:16 [2×]; 14:14, 15 [2×], 19; Eph 4:17, 23; Phil 4:7; Col 2:8; 2 Thes 2:2; 1 Tim 6:5; 2 Tim 3:8; Tit 1:15), and twice in Revelation (13:18; 17:9). In Paul, *nous* or *the mind* is a human faculty that enables one to discern the will of God morally and in the events taking place in history.[11] Thus Rom 12:2 states, "be transformed by the renewal of your *mind* (μεταμορφοῦσθε τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοός), that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." The *nous* is also the faculty that enables a person to acknowledge and worship Creator God. The reason for idolatry is that idolaters have a degenerate *nous*. Paul states in Rom 1:28: "And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base *mind* (παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν) and to improper conduct." Interestingly, the two occurrences of *nous* in Revelation bear more than a passing resemblance to these uses of *nous* in Paul. Revelation 13:18 states: "This calls for wisdom: let him who has a *mind* (ὁ ἔχων νοῦν) count the number of the beast" (my translation). And again, Rev 17:9 states: "This calls for a *mind* with wisdom (ὧδε ὁ νοῦς ὁ ἔχων σοφίαν)"(RSV). The word *nous* or *mind* in these two passages denotes a renewed human faculty that enables one to discern the identity of the beast and its immoral and impious schemes. *Mutatis mutandis*, this means possessing a renewed *mind* is essential to faith because it enables one to recognize the true worship of Creator God and to avoid idolatry. This unusual term (at least for the NT) appearing in Paul and Revelation in approximately the same sense and context clearly suggests intertextuality.[12]

In this context, it is difficult to miss the clear Pauline echo in Rev 14:12: "Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus (τὴν πίστιν Ἰησου)." This phrase "the *faith of Jesus* (τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ)" is nearly identical to the phrase "the *faith of Jesus* Christ (πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστου)" in Gal 2:16 and certainly echoes the verbal phrase "we have believed in Christ Jesus (ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν)." The ambiguity, however,

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[11] J. Behm, νοῦς, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, et. al., trans. G. W. Bromiley, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 958-960.

[12] Aune, 769, thinks that Rev 13:18 and 17:9 allude to Dan 12:10. It is possible that with the term *mind* the author of Revelation is trying to index the apocalyptic framework of Paul's gospel.

that beclouds the Pauline phrase—whether it is an objective or a subjective genitive—also beclouds John's.[13] This discussion, however, lies outside the scope of this essay. For our purpose, it suffices to say merely two things: (1) in Rev 14:12, the quintessential Pauline phrase "the faith of Jesus" appears together with the phrase "the commandments of God" as a direct object of the verb τηρεῖν (to keep); and (2) this unique and vague phrase appears nowhere else in the NT except in Paul and Rev 14:12. By using the phrase as the direct object of the verb *to keep* in conjunction with "the law of God," Rev 14:12 appears to treat *the faith of Jesus*, like the law, as something to keep and to fulfill.[14] A similar usage of faith is found in 2 Tim 4:7 ("I have kept the faith [τὴν πίστιν τετήρηκα]").

These parallels seem to indicate that Revelation 14 is intentionally trying to engage Rom 1 in order to make a statement about Paul's gospel. In Rev 14:6-12, the gospel has three basic characteristics: (1) divine judgment forms an integral part of the gospel (vv. 6b-7a); (2) the proper

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[13] For bibliography and summaries of positions taken on the issue, see Sigve Tonstad, "Πιστις Χριστοῦ: Reading Paul in a New Paradigm," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 40 (2002): 37-47. Tonstad argues for the subjective genitive on grounds that (1) Rom 3:21-26 represents an accurate reading of Hab 2:3-4, and (2) like Habakkuk's concern, Paul's concern in Rom 3:21-26 is theodicy (pp. 47-59). Tonstad's thesis that the nature of Jesus' faithfulness was "the ultimate rebuttal of the satanic misrepresentation" of God (p. 59) may perhaps be true for Revelation, but has little exegetical basis in Paul. Satan does not play a prominent role in Paul. See also Bruce W. Longenecker, "Defining the Faithful Character of the Covenant Community: Galatians 2:15-21 and Beyond," in James D. G. Dunn, ed., *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), 75-97. For Tonstad's detailed study of the phrase *the faith of Jesus* in the context of Revelation and theodicy, see *idem,* "Saving God's Reputation: The Theological Function of *Pistis Iesou* in the Cosmic Narrative of Revelation," (Ph.D. diss., University of St. Andrews, 2004), 250-292. In the dissertation, Tonstad updates the bibliography and softens his views about the Pauline *pistis christou* (pp. 278-284). The objective-genitive reading will be adopted for both Revelation and Paul in this essay; when the term *faith* is used in this essay, it refers to the faith of the believer. It should be noted that Tonstad himself does not oppose this usage of the word *faith* (cf. pp. 288-289).

[14] Tonstad's argument that τηρεῖν means "to preserve" or "have" in Rev 14:12 seems forced; cf. *idem*, "God's Reputation," 250-278. The verb τηρεῖν is used in this sense mostly with personal objects; see Harald Riesenfeld, τηρεῖν, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, et. al., trans. G. W. Bromiley, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 142-146. When used with the law, it means keep or fulfill (ibid., 143-145). I, however, accept the cosmic background of Paul's concept of faith on grounds that Paul's theology is largely apocalyptic in orientation. See Johan Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).

response to the proclamation of the gospel is fearing God and giving glory to him as the Creator of the world (v. 7b, 9-11);[15] and (3) the law has an active role alongside faith in the life of a Christian (v. 12). The question is whether these notions are consistent with Paul's concept of the gospel, particularly as articulated in Romans. To determine this, I will examine Rom 2 in detail, below. I chose Rom 2 for two reasons. First, Rom 2 is the only extensive discussion on law and judgment in the entire Pauline corpus. Second, Rom 1-2 appears to form a single unit held together by the themes of divine impartiality[16] and the wrath of God.[17] As a continuation of ch.1, Rom 2 offers an ideal setting from which to clarify the relations between Rom 1 and Rev 14.

Paul's Concept of Law and Judgment in Rom 2:1-29

In his article "The Law in Romans 2," which appears in James D. G. Dunn's *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, N. T. Wright calls Rom 2 "the Achilles heel of schemes on Paul and the law."[18] Professor Wright states:

> One commentary after another has set out the scheme, according to which the chapters [1-8] deal with human sin (1-3), the divine remedy in Christ, and justification by faith (3-4), and, one way or another, the new life the Christian enjoys (5-8). The epistle thus far, in other words, is imagined to follow and expound some sort of *ordo salutis.* Within this Romans 2

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[15] Aune, 827, rightly states concerning the response called for in 14:7a: "This is not the gospel of early Christianity but the message proclaimed by Hellenistic Judaism and taken over by early Christianity, reflections of which are found in the NT." It is therefore imperative to try to determine whether, or how far, Paul deviates from early Judaism. Tonstad, "God's Reputation," rightly places Rev 14:12 in a cosmic context. Rev 14:7b prescribes the church's proper response to the gospel in apocalyptic terms. It does not seem warranted, however, that there needs to be a sharp dichotomy between soteriology and theodicy, as Tonstad makes out (279-280).

[16] Jouette M. Bassler, *Divine Impartiality: Paul and a Theological Axiom* (Chico, Cal.: Scholars Press, 1982). On pp. 123-137, she gives five reasons why Rom 1:16-2:11 is a unit. (1) The language is similar throughout 1:18-2:11). (2) Almost all ancient Greek codices that have chapter divisions place a chapter division after 2:11. (3) Romans 2:6-11 has been carefully structured to reflect the measure-for-measure justice outlined in 1:22-32. (4) The formula "to the Jew first and also the Greek" found in 1:16 is repeated in 2:10 as a unit marker. (5) The wording of 2:9-10 closely resembles that of 1:18.

[17] Jervell, 328.

[18] N. T. Wright, "The Law in Romans 2" in James D. G. Dunn, ed., *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001).

> has no business to be speaking either of how one is justified or of the results of justification.[19]

Needless to say, the law is not a salient feature of this *ordo salutis.* A believer moves from a life of sin to the remedy found in Christ through justification by faith, and the law does not have a significant role in the new life of a Christian. Romans 2 differs with this simplistic understanding of salvation.

The context of Rom 2 is the final judgment. In Rom 2:5, Paul warns his imaginary interlocutor who judges others that they are storing up wrath "against the day of wrath (ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς) and revelation of the righteous judgment (καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας)" (KJV). These direct references to the future judgment—namely "the wrath of God" and "the righteous judgment"—establish the futuristic orientation of Rom 2.[20] The same futuristic orientation is also evident in v. 12: "All who have sinned without the law *will also perish* (ἀπολοῦνται) without the law, and all who have sinned under the law *will be judged* (κριθήσονται) by the law" (v. 12; RSV). The future tense verbs—"will perish" and "will be judged"—unmistakably allude to the future "general" judgment.[21] In this light, the categorical statement in v. 13 is also a reference to the final judgment:[22] "It is. . . the doers of the law who *will be justified* (δικαιωθήσονται)." Verse 16 also makes an allusion to the final judgment:[23] "in the *day* when God will judge (ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὅτε κρίνει ὁ θεός)"(NKJV; italics mine).

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[19] Ibid., 131.

[20] James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 2 vols., Word Biblical Commentary, vols. 38a-b (Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1988), 1:82.

[21] Wright, "Romans 2,"143-1; Bassler, 140. "Paul . . . focuses . . . on the impartiality that is ultimately effective at the final judgment."

[22] Dunn rightly notes the "eschatological dimension" of the future tense "will be justified": Dunn, *Romans*, 97. See also Wright, "Romans 2," 143. However, the notion in 2:13 that the *law* is the norm of the final judgment is unusual. Paul generally connects the condemnatory work of the law with Israel's past and present predicaments rather than with the future universal judgment (cf. 2 Cor 3:7, 13-15; Rom 5:13-14, 20-21; Gal 3:10, 19, 23-24.)

[23] Delling, "ἡμέρα," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, et. al., trans. G. W. Bromiley, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 952; Bassler, 147.

In this context, Paul introduces the word *law* in 2:12, for the first time in Romans. He then uses it in rapid succession to the end of ch. 2 (vv. 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 23, 25, 26, 27) and continues to mention it in every chapter of Romans, all the way to ch. 13. The reason for this rather dramatic introduction and ensuing rapid-fire mention of the law in Rom 2 appears to be to establish a definition of the law for the rest of the letter. According to Rom 2, the law is the sole criterion of judgment in the final judgment, whose demand is for moral and ethical performance.[24] Yet this definition is not free of exegetical problems. For example, Paul's statement in 3:20 "that no human being will be justified (δικαιωθήσεται) . . . by works of the law" apparently contradicts 2:13 (that "the doers of the law … will be justified"). Another problem is 2:12, which states: "all who have sinned *without the law* will . . . perish *without the law*" (2:12). According to this verse, it appears that the law will not be allowed to serve as a criterion of judgment for those who did not have the law. Thus Wright states, wrongly, that "the law sets the standard by which Israel will be judged; Gentiles will be judged without reference to it."[25] Furthermore, according to 2:16, the standard of judgment is not the performance of the law but the gospel ("God shall judge . . . according to my gospel" [KJV]). In other words, the depiction of the final judgment in Rom 2, which has the law at its center, apparently collides with the rest of Romans, which depicts the centrality of Christ and the joy of acquittal and freedom that results from justification by faith. Wright describes the problem this way:

> In Romans, as elsewhere in Paul, it is present justification, not future, that is closely correlated with faith. Future justification, acquittal at the last great Assize, always takes place on the basis of the totality of the life lived (e.g. Romans 14:11f; 2 Cor 5:10). *It is because the relation between the two has by no means always been understood . . . that exegetes have glossed uneasily over this passage [2:12-16], and have flattened it into a general treatment of the sinfulness of all humans beings*" (italics mine).[26]

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[24] Bassler, 141, rightly states: "Verse 13 established performance, not possession, as the decisive factor." 2 Corinthians 5:10 mentions the same criterion for the final judgment: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has *done* in the body." See Kent L. Yinger, *Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to Deeds* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 260-270.

[25] Wright, "Romans 2,"149.

[26] Ibid., 144. See also, Yinger, 6-16.

One wonders, however, whether Romans 2:14-15 and 2:26-29, rather than being the source of the problem, might not be the key to the solution. These verses, particularly 2:14-15, contain detailed descriptions of how Gentiles keep the law (ἡ ἀκροβυστία τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου φυλάσσῃ). If these Gentiles are Christians, then we may be half way to the solution because we would know from these verses how, according to Paul's thinking, believing Gentiles experience the dynamic of faith, law, and judgment in their lives. And on the basis of an analysis of this passage, we could derive an understanding about the relation between judgment by works and justification by faith. In fact, this is what I propose we do. But there is a problem. Scholarship is sharply divided about the identity of the Gentiles in these verses, whether they are pagan or Christian. Jouette Bassler and N. T. Wright have addressed this thorny question from opposite sides of the debate with greater creativity and thoroughness than anyone else has in the field in recent years. In my view, Wright, who argues that these verses refer to Gentile Christians, has the better argument. This actually represents a change of mind on my part because I began reading Wright's article with the opposite conviction. I will summarize Wright's arguments here,[27] not only because they represent my present position but

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[27] For references and details, see Wright, "Romans 2," 134-139, 144-145. Bassler, 141-143, provides an excellent summary of both positions. In favor of the view that the Gentiles are not Christians, Bassler lists the following six arguments: (1) The phrase "not having the law (τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα)" in v. 14 cannot apply to Christians since, in the ultimate sense, Paul argues that Christians keep the law. (2) Ἕλληνες (Greeks) in 2:10 does not refer to Christians, and, consequently, cannot refer to the same body of people as ἔθνη (Gentiles) in 2:14. (3) φύσει (by nature) in 2:14 goes with the phrase that immediately follows and refers to the experience of the non-Christians. (4) The terminology of nature, law, and conscience belong to "the Greek concept of natural law." (5) A similar notion of natural law existed in Judaism, and, as such, φύσει does not specifically refer to Christian experience. (6) The theme of impartiality running through chapters 1 and 2 will be severely compromised if the Gentiles in 2:14-15 are read as Christians. This last argument seems a bit circular to me since her thesis is that Rom 1-2 center on the theme of divine impartiality. For a more succinct summary of the views and refutations, see C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 155-156. Commentators generally avoid detailed discussion of the issue. For example, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 1st ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993). Fitzmyer, who rejects the "Gentile Christian" argument, presents basically only two arguments: (1) the context does not make

because they for the most part constitute fresh evidence. Wright begins with 2:26-29.[28] (1) The language of Rom 2:29 ("real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal") closely resembles that of Rom 7:6, 2 Cor 3:16, and Phil 3:3. These passages all contrast spirit and letter, or circumcision and spirit, to describe the Christian experience of the new life. Rom 2:29 should not be an exception. (2) The mention of the spirit in 2:29 uses the new covenant language of Ezek 36:24. Paul's intention in 2:29 is to describe a complete transformation of the heart. (3) The term "reckon (λογισθήσεται)" refers to justification by faith because this is how the word is used throughout Romans. (4) Romans 2:25-26 is an interjection that anticipates a much fuller discussion that will appear later in the letter. Interjections of this type abound in Romans.

Then Wright offers six more weighty arguments in connection with 2:14-15.[29] The first three of these arguments concern the term φύσει(by nature), which is at the center of the debate. (1) φύσει in 2:14 modifies the preceding phrase "the Gentiles who have not the law (ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα)." The resultant phrase "the Gentiles who have not the law by nature" would then be referring to "those outside the covenant." This however, still does not alleviate the problem that ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει still sounds awkward. (2) Wright points to τὸν ἀσθενοῦντα τῇ πίστει in Rom 14:1 ("as for the man who is weak in faith") as evidence of how Paul is capable of placing a dative noun after the participle it modifies. Wright grants that ἔθνη φύσει τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα would have been more natural sounding. (3) If φύσει refers to the coincidental and occasional performance of the law by pagan Gentiles, then 2:14-15 would be only an aside inserted into the overall argument of Rom 2. But there is no clear indication in the text that Paul intends 2:14-15 as a mere

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clear that Gentile Christians are meant here; and (2) φύσει (by nature) goes with the phrase that immediately follows ("do the things in the law"; NKJV). Dunn, *Romans*, 98, likewise also appeals to the less than clear notion of the "widespread sense of rightness and wrongness of certain conduct." On the question of φύσει, see Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 45. Achtemeier argues that to take φύσει the way, for example, Fitzmyer suggests would make Jews inferior to Gentiles because the Jewish sense of rightness required a revelation. Commentators unfortunately overlook Achtemeier's point.

[28] Wright, "Romans 2," 134-139.

[29] Ibid., 144-146.

aside. (4) The phrase "the law written on their hearts (τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν)" is an allusion to Jeremiah 31:33. There is no satisfactory explanation why Paul should have chosen Jeremiah's new covenant language to describe pagan Gentiles. (5) If 2:14 ("when Gentiles who have not the law") is a continuation of the thought in v. 13 ("the doers of the law will be justified"), then it would mean that, unlike the Jews, the pagan Gentiles will be justified in the final judgment for their occasional and coincidental performance of some aspects of the law. This would be unfair. (6) If the Gentiles mentioned in 2:12-14 refer to pagan Gentiles, then the idea in v. 15 that the Gentiles have the law written on their hearts would be nonsense since these Gentiles will be destroyed anyway, without the law (v. 12; ἀνόμως καὶ ἀπολοῦνται).

Even after these arguments, difficulties and ambiguities remain, but no one has yet mounted equally compelling, fresh arguments to counter Wright's evidence, and it is not possible to wait until every difficulty has been removed to begin working on a text. We will proceed on the assumption that the Gentiles in Rom 2:14-16 and 2:26-29 are Christian. According to v. 14, these Gentile Christians are able to perform what the law requires (τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν), and they are a law to themselves (οὗτοι . . . ἑαυτοῖς εἰσιν νόμος). How can this be? The new covenant motif in v. 15 explains the phenomena. These Gentile Christians are able to keep the law because "what the law requires is written on their hearts (ὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν)." And this eschatological experience takes place through a believer's inner activity (τῆς συνειδήσεως) consisting of accusations and excuses made in response to the conflicting thoughts that arise in their consciences (μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν κατηγορούντων ἢ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων).[30] According to v.16, this decision-making process takes place in the secrecy of the heart

[30] See Bassler, 147. She notes that the words συμμαρτυρούσης, κατηγορούντων, and ἀπολογουμένων are legal terminologies. Mainly on the strength of this observation and on the basis the problematic nature of ἐν ἡμέρᾳ (as to which verb it goes with), she argues that the accusations and the excuses refer to the activities of the conscience that will appear as eschatological witnesses. Bassler, however, fails to consider the force of the present participle συμμαρτυρούσης that connects to the main verb ἐνδείκνυνται, which is also in the present tense. On p. 149, she states that ἐνδείκνυνται refers to "an ongoing present activity." If this is true, then the activities denoted by συμμαρτυρούσης, κατηγορούντων, and ἀπολογουμένων also have to refer to "an ongoing present activity," because a present participle generally denotes an action that coincides in time with the action of the main verb.

(τὰ κρυπτὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων) while bearing in mind the final judgment (cf. ἐν ἡμέρᾳ).[31] If the protasis of 2:26a ("if [ἐὰν] a man who is uncircumcised keeps [φυλάσσῃ] the precepts of the law"[32]) is a recap of these inner processes described in 2:14-16, then we have in this passage an unusually graphic description of the mechanics through which a Christian experiences and fulfills the new covenant in their lives. In other words, 2:14-16 is a description of faith experienced in relation to law and judgment. Before getting too far, however, we need to ask whether these ideas are consistent with Paul's statements in the rest of Romans.

Law, Judgment, and Faith

According to Paul, one of the functions of the law is to cause humans to experience condemnation *before God.* Romans 3:19-20 clarifies this function of the law.

> Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable *to God* (τῷ θεῷ). For no human being will be justified *in his sight* (ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ) by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin (3:19-20).

The problem of the Jews was not that they possessed the law or that they tried to keep it.[33] Rather, their problem was that the way they kept the law and reasoned about it prevented them from recognizing that they were in fact breaking the law and at the same time failing to experience the terror of God's impartial judgment. When Paul makes statements like "through the law comes knowledge of sin" (3:20) or "the law came in to increase the trespass" (Rom 5:20), his intent is not to demean the law. His point, rather, is that, if the law had been allowed to function as originally intended by

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[31] I am taking ἐν to mean "in the presence of." See under I, 3 in "ἐν," *BAG*, 258. I am taking "the day" here in a personal rather than temporal sense (more below).

[32] This protasis indicates *reality*: the Gentile Christians *are* indeed keeping the law. To use C. F. D. Moule's language, the protasis of Rom 2:26 denotes a "recurrent or future condition, real"; see Moule, 148.

[33] Contra R. Bultmann. According to Bultmann, the effort to keep the law is in itself already sinful because it leads to boasting; Ruldolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament: Complete in One Volume*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, vol. 1 (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1951), 264.

God, it would have given the people the τῷ θεῷ (*before-God*)[34] experience described in 3:19-20, and this experience would have removed boasting from them, leaving them condemned before God without excuse (cf. 1:20; εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους). Therefore, Paul's aim in Rom 1-3 is to explain the law in such a way that it is allowed to fulfill its intended function, which is to bring sinners before God, face to face, to receive condemnation. In this light, it is noteworthy how Paul creates an *inclusio* in 3:11 and 3:18 with quotations that define sin as a failure to seek God's presence. In v. 11, he quotes from Ps 14: "no one understands, no one seeks for God." This quotation would no doubt have caused an informed reader to recall the opening words of Ps 14: "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'" (v. 1). A similar quote closes the catena of scriptural quotations that follow the opening charge: "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom 3:18). The refusal to acknowledge God as God is the essence of sin. And it is in just such terms that Paul portrays human sinfulness in Rom 1-3. The pagan, the judgmental person in 2:1-11 (whoever they are), and the Jew—they all have in common their desire to depart from the presence of God and give glory to themselves. Therefore, a sinner can fulfill the law only by fulfilling its original intention, which is to stand *before God* (τῷ θεῷ) and face judgment.

Remarkably, Paul uses the same τῷ θεῷ language to describe faith. According to Rom 4:2, Abraham had nothing to boast about *before God* (οὐ πρὸς θεόν). Instead, he was justified because he had faith *in the presence God* (ἐπίστευσεν Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ; v. 3). Paul repeats the same point in v. 17: "God, *in whose presence* he believed (κατέναντι οὗ ἐπίστευσεν θεοῦ; my translation)," and in v. 20: "he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory *to God* (δοὺς δόξαν τῷ θεῷ)." Clearly, Abraham's faith—the yardstick by which we are to measure our own—is consistently described in Rom 4 as a τῷ θεῷ experience—an experience of existing *in the presence of God*. In other words, faith and law have essentially the same spiritual structure. They both demand that we exist *before God the Creator*, whose judgment knows no partiality. Romans 6:11 states: "You also must consider yourselves dead to sin (τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ) and alive *to God* (τῷ θεῷ) in Christ Jesus." Here Paul uses the word *sin* in the same personal sense as

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[34] I will use the Greek expression τῷ θεῷ in the rest of the paper because the English phrase *before God* fails to capture its full meaning.

God. This is even clearer in v. 13: "Do not yield your members *to sin* (τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ) as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves *to God* (τῷ θεῷ)." As indicated by the precise juxtaposition of *to sin* and *to God* in these verses, the opposite of the presence of God is the presence of sin whose wicked whims control human existence. Faith[35] denotes the life of one who has been judged before the Judgment Seat of an impartial God and set free from the grips of sin to enjoy life in God's presence. The τῷ θεῷ language appears again in 7:4: "we may bear fruit *to God* (καρποφορήσωμεν τῷ θεῷ)." This time, however, the contrast is between τῷ θεῷ and τῷ νόμῳ (the law): "you have died *to the law* (ἐθανατώθητε τῷ νόμῳ)." Then 7:6 further contrasts τῷ θεῷ with τῷ θανάτῳ (death): "our [bodily] members . . . bear fruit *for death* (εἰς τὸ καρποφορῆσαι τῷ θανάτῳ)." The existence away from the presence of God described in Rom 6 and 7 may be given in a chart as follows. (I use the phrase "in the presence" to denote a general sense of environment or setting.)

6:10-11	In the presence of sin (τῇ ἁμαρτία)
7:4	In the presence of the law (τῷ νόμω)
7:5	In the presence of death (τῇ ἁμαρτία)

These depictions of sinful existence closely resemble the depictions of sin and human rebellion in chs 1-3. In chs. 6-7, the τῷ θεῷ language, used opposite the three modes of existence under sin, defines faith as a life lived *before God*.

In Rom 14, Paul again takes up the τῷ θεῷ language, as it were, in a grand finale. Paul declares in v. 6: "a person who eats eats *before the Lord* (κυρίῳ ἐσθίει), for they offer thanks *to God* (εὐχαριστεῖ γὰρ τῷ θεῷ; my translation)." The anarthrous κύριος (Lord) in this verse appears to reflect the translation of the tetragrammaton YHWH in the LXX.[36] Similar usages of the τῷ θεῷ language occur throughout the chapter (vv. 7, 8, 11, 10, 12), evoking the OT phrase לפני יהוה (*before the Lord*; cf. v. 11). In the

[35] Romans 6:8 explains the resurrection experience of a baptized person in confessional terms (πιστεύομεν ὅτι καὶ συζήσομεν αὐτῷ). Confession implies faith.

[36] Cf. Gottfried Quell, κύριος, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, et. al., trans. G. W. Bromiley, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 1058-1062.

OT, the expression לפני יהוה (*before the Lord*) is used to designate the entirety of life lived before God, privately, collectively, and cultically.[37] Likewise, for Paul, living by faith means that we exist לפני יהוה, whether we eat, drink, or rest. The judgment language of Rom 14:10-12 highlights this meaning of faith: "we will all stand before the judgment seat of God" (v. 10) and "each of us shall give account of himself [to God] (τῷ θεῷ; v. 12)."[38] These descriptions of faith as a life under judgment are remarkably similar to those that describe the life under the law. What is Paul's point? Faith and law basically operate under the same spiritual principle in the life of a believer.[39] Both faith and law cause people to live and die *lipnê yhwh*, *before the Lord*. The prospect of judgment continues for those who live by faith, as for those who are under the law, not only as a future event but as a reality to be reckoned with on a daily, if not hourly, basis. The difference is that, acquitted, the people of faith boldly approach the throne of grace (cf. 5:1-2; τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἐσχήκαμεν [τῇ πίστει] εἰς τὴν χάριν ταύτην). Jouette Bassler rightly notes: "The impartiality of the new dispensation of grace, which is open to all without distinction, is consistent with, even grounded in, the impartiality in judgment."[40] The present tense verbs in 14:8 denote this on-going reality of divine judgment and acquittal in the life of a believer (τῷ κυρίῳ ζῶμεν . . . τῷ κυρίῳ ἀποθνῄσκομεν). This understanding of faith seems to echo the Psalms that express an ardent desire to behold the face of God (cf. Ps 24:6; 27:8). In Rom 14:22-23, Paul ends the chapter on the note of faith, with a significant undertone of the τῷ θεῷ language. He writes: "Hast thou faith (σὺ πίστιν ἔχεις)? have *it* to thyself *before God* (ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ)" (v. 22; KJV). This statement as

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[37] H. Simian-Yofre, פָּנִים, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, et al., trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 610-611. See also Mervyn D. Fowler, "The Meaning of *lipnê YHWH* in the Old Testament," *Zeitschrift des Altentestamentlichen Wissenschaft* 99 (1987): 384-390, who states that *lipnê YHWH* is used in the OT to "express the direct and personal communication between God and man" (p. 390) in addition to its usual local and cultic usage.

[38] Although the phrase "to God" in v. 12 is omitted in some manuscripts, major uncials include it, but even without it, the phrase "give account" implies judgment.

[39] Revelation 14:12 perhaps intends to make this point by designating both the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus as the direct objects of the verb *to keep* (οἱ τηροῦντες τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ)—a verb that has a connotation of obedience; against Aune, 837.

[40] Bassler, 156.

it were sums up the τῷ θεῷ principle of faith repeatedly outlined in chs 4, 6 and 7. There are only two ways to live a life, in the presence of God or away from it. Paul writes: "whatever does not proceed from faith is sin (πᾶν δὲ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἁμαρτία ἐστίν)" (v. 23; RSV). Faith means a life intentionally lived in the presence of God. Conversely, the opposite of faith is forgetfulness that keeps the fear of God's judgment out of one's life and consciousness.

Therefore, I submit that the proper response to the gospel given in Rev 14:7 is a rather accurate summary of Paul's understanding of faith expressed in Romans: Living by faith means: (a) to fear God and give glory to him who is an impartial Judge of all humankind[41] and (b) to worship God, who is Creator of the world.

Objections and Conclusion

There will obviously be objections to and questions about my interpretation of Romans. Due to space, I will only deal with four of the objections, which are: (1) my concept of judgment is too individualistic; (2) my reading of Romans is too dependent on N. T. Wright's argument according to which Rom 2:14-16 and 2:26-29 refer to Gentile Christians; (3) my reading will foster petty legalism and self-centered introspection; and (4) my reading takes away from the centrality of Christ and turns faith into human performance. I will take up these objections one at a time.

First, any discussion about judgment implies a cosmic, apocalyptic, and prophetic perspective that addresses issues like theodicy and justice. I do not wish to deny this. My intent in this essay has been simply to show that Paul's concept of faith exists in inseparable relation to judgment, however one defines it.

Second, my reading of Romans is not as dependent on N. T. Wright's argument as it might appear. The original draft of this essay was actually written on the premise that the Gentiles referred to in Rom 2 are primarily pagans. My original argument was that Paul is intentionally vague in Rom 2 in order to make clear that everyone—Jews, pagan Gentiles, and Christian Gentiles—will all face God's impartial judgment on the basis of performance. In addition, the debate about the identity of the Gentiles in Rom 2 does not materially affect my more important argument that Paul

[41] Aune, 827, rightly notes: "The phrase 'the fear of God' or 'the fear of the Lord' is often used in a way synonymous with true faith (Ps 34:11)."

explains the experience of faith in relation to judgment and in terms that approximate the experience of the law.

Third, while it is true that my exposition of the gospel fosters introspection, it does not necessarily lead to petty legalism or self-centeredness. The "before-God" character of faith preempts the possibility of legalism in that no one needs to answer to anyone else, except to God, whether one has kept the law. Legalism is a product of judgmentalism that causes people to measure themselves against each other. Being no respecter of persons, God will judge everyone based on *his* standards.

As for introspection, for many, faith means saying goodbye to the feelings of uncertainty as something characterizing the existence under the law. Faith means an assurance of salvation free from all doubts. Paul would agree that faith does not breed doubts, but he would not agree that faith frees you from having to look inside yourself and at God's judgment in trying to determine whether your *actions* are just, whether they accord with the will of God. This is clear from Rom 14:22-23, even if we leave Rom 2:14-16 out of the discussion. Paul writes: "Happy is he who has no reason to *judge himself for what he approves* (ὁ μὴ κρίνων ἑαυτὸν ἐν ᾧ δοκιμάζει). But he who has doubts is condemned" (Rom 14:22b-23a). According to this passage, a believer engages in private and personal judiciary activities that result in either approval or disapproval of their own actions.[42] The experiences of inner conflict arising from these activities and the joyful experience of the gospel are necessarily coterminous. Faith that causes people to live *before God* also allows them to enjoy the power of personal agency to make even difficult ethical decisions by themselves. This is the new covenant. The notion that faith offers an assurance that precludes the fear of judgment and accountability is a gospel unknown to Paul.

In this light, Krister Stendahl's charge that the notion of introspective conscience was introduced to Western Christianity by Augustine and Martin Luther needs a fresh examination.[43] Due to the scope of this paper, only a few brief comments are possible. Stendahl is probably right in his

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[42] Bassler, 163. These descriptions closely resemble the experience of the Gentiles in Rom 2:15.

[43] Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963): 199-215, reprinted in Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 78-96. The page numbers given in this essay correspond to those in *Paul among Jews.*

observation that Paul had "a rather 'robust' conscience."[44] At the same time, a robust conscience does not preclude introspection. The various Greek schools of philosophy were nothing if they were not about introspection. They were deeply involved in what Stanley Stowers calls "the technology of the self" through which they tried to carefully map out the inner workings of the human mind and body to foster self-improvement and perfection.[45] Stendahl is himself unduly influenced by Augustine and Luther when he equates introspection with a "troubled conscience."[46] As we saw, for Paul, introspection is synonymous with the personal agency and accountability of the individual[47] expressing inwardness and freedom enjoyed under the new covenant.

Finally, my understanding of the gospel does not need to undermine the centrality of Christ. The law plays a hermeneutical role (by no means the only one it plays). One cannot understand the true meaning of faith without the belief that the law is the norm of judgment. Almost every mention of faith in Paul presupposes an understanding of law and judgment. Judgment by law based on performance is the default procedure by which one is

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[44] Ibid., 80.

[45] Stanley K. Stowers, "Does Pauline Christianity Resemble a Hellenistic Philosophy?," in Troels Engberg-Pedersen, ed., *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 81-102.

[46] Stendahl, 81, 84. Stendahl himself resorts to guilt when speaking on social and political issues: "how insignificant it is to the world that one little person repents, because his actions move on. And if that is true about such trivial things as pornography, how gruesomely true it is about our collective acts, our responsibilities as a nation and as human beings dirtying up this earth morally and ecologically. If the consequences last, is it really important that the individual or even the people repent? Yes, it is for them, for God, and perhaps for the future. *But the guilt lies heavy*" (pp. 104-105). What Stendahl despises is theological guilt, which for him is a mere "soul game." His willingness to impose guilt on people for their bad social and political conduct simply means that, for him, sin as a theological category no longer functions as part of his reality. It is a mistake, however, to think that sin was not a stark reality for Paul. Paul writes: "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith (Ἑαυτοὺς πειράζετε εἰ ἐστὲ ἐν τῇ πίστει). Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!" (2 Cor 13:5). If Paul felt no need of introspection for himself, he certainly did not hesitate to impose it on his Gentile congregations, albeit collectively.

[47] Yinger, 287, rightly notes: "Though collective aspects are not eliminated, it is particularly *individual* accountability which is now stressed most strongly" (italics original).

declared righteous. Justification by faith is an exception made to this rule—an eschatological surprise.[48] The Cross graciously opened up the unexpected *kairos* of the opportunity for salvation (cf. 2 Cor 6:2; ἰδοὺ νῦν καιρὸς εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἰδοὺ νῦν ἡμέρα σωτηρίας). We cannot fully appreciate this unexpected nature of grace without the default of judgment by law.

Furthermore, the Pauline gospel does not preempt the need for human performance. A new covenant experience that excludes ethical responsibility is an oxymoron. N. T. Wright bifurcates when he states in the same breath that the keeping of the law is "in tune with Ezekiel 36" and that "it is a matter . . . [not] of ethics, but of status."[49] As a new covenant experience, the gospel represents the higher expectation of righteousness articulated in the Sermon on the Mount and Paul's own paraenesis. If the letters of Paul are any indication of his gospel, then we must say that the

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[48] Ibid., 6-16, offers a survey of the ways in which scholars have tried to explain the relation between justification by faith and judgment by works. To summarize Yinger: (1) As a vestigial remain of Jewish theology, Judgment by works cannot be reconciled with Paul's theology of grace even though Paul often places the two side by side (Gillis Wetter). (2) Judgment by works is a subcategory of justification by faith; justification by faith guarantees the favorable verdict at the final judgment (Herbert Braun). (3) As polemic doctrines, judgment by works is aimed at the proud and justification by faith, at the legalists (Nigel Watson). (4) Paul wrote occasional letters, so there is no need to figure out the relation between judgment by works and justification by faith. Judgment should be considered by itself in the context of Paul's Jewish eschatology and the present reprieve from its wrath that the believers enjoy (Calvin Roetzel). (5) Paul uses judgment by work only for a heuristic purpose (Ernst Synofzik). (6) Judgment by works deals with reward and justification by faith deals with salvation; judgment has no effect on salvation (D. E. Kühl). (7) Justification by faith is a free gift of salvation, but the extent to which the salvation can be claimed will be determined at the final judgment (Richard Devor). (8) There will be two judgments, one based on faith to separate the justified Christian from the rest and another one based on works to determine the reward of the justified (Luise Mattern). (9) Justification by faith allows the believer to live a sinless life, giving them confidence to face judgment (Floyd Filson). Yinger's own position is that judgment by works *confirms* justification by faith (p. 290). My present view comes closest to Devor's: justification by faith is an exception made to the default of judgment by works, but I hasten to add that the new covenant experience inaugurated and sustained in one's life through justification by faith prepares one for the final judgment, which will be based on performance. Justification by faith, per se, does not guarantee salvation (cf. 1 Cor 9:27; "but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified").

[49] Wright, "Romans 2,"139; but see his affirmation on p. 137. My problem with Wright is not with his brilliant new covenant reading of Rom 2 but his attempts to limit the new covenant reality to status.

gospel is just as much a demand for ethical purity and accountability as it is a proclamation of grace. To be judged according to the gospel (Rom 2:16) means to be judged according to the new covenant that promises and expects the law to be written on our hearts. In Rom 8:3-4, Paul states that, through Christ's death, the law is fulfilled in us (τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου πληρωθῇ ἐν ἡμῖν). In 13:8, Paul states that love fulfills the law (πλήρωμα οὖν νόμου ἡ ἀγάπη). The two foci of accountability *before God* under the law—the fear of God's judgment and the worship of the Creator God—remain unchanged under faith. Certainly, salvation is by faith, but the fulfillment of the law is not optional for Christians; the business of being a Christian is about fulfilling the moral and ethical demands of the law before God and before our fellow humans.

In conclusion, then, the apocalyptic delineations of the gospel found in Rev 14:6-12 are consistent with Paul's concept of the gospel in Romans. And it appears that the third angel's message is indeed the message of righteousness by faith in verity.

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John 5:18: Jesus and Sabbath Law
A Fresh Look at a Challenging Text

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> For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him [Jesus]; *not only was he breaking the Sabbath*, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God (John 5:18 NIV).[1]

The text above follows the healing of a paralytic man at Bethesda (John 5:1-15) and a brief exchange between certain Jews and Jesus concerning appropriate Sabbath behavior (5:16-17). It in turn introduces a discourse by Jesus on His person and authority (5:19-47). As it appears in the above translation John 5:18 poses a substantial theological problem because it presents Jesus as a habitual Sabbath-breaker. Some Bible translations try to alleviate the problem by translating the imperfect ἔλυεν with a simple past or a simple past perfect thus removing the notion of ongoing violation.[2] Such attempts are forced.[3]

Was Jesus in habitual breach of the Sabbath? Apart from John 5, there are six other Sabbath controversies in the gospels: (1) the incident in the cornfields (Matt 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5); (2) the healing of the

[1] All texts are from the *Holy Bible: New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978).

[2] NKJ, NAB, RSV, "he not only broke the Sabbath"; KJV "he had not only broken the Sabbath"; ASV "he not only brake the Sabbath"; DBY "he had not only violated the Sabbath."

[3] Leon Morris, *Expository Reflections on the Gospel of John*, (Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1988), 275: "The Jews looked to the habitual attitude, not one isolated act and word."

man with the withered hand (Matt 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11); (3) the healing of a crippled woman (Luke 13:10-17); (4) the healing of a man with dropsy (Luke 14:1-6); (5) a follow up controversy about the healing of John 5:1-18 (John 7:19-24);[4] and (6) the healing of a blind man (John 9:1-41).

This article will explore some exegetical issues in John 5:18 in relation to the immediate and broader contexts of Sabbath controversies in the gospels. It will first evaluate two traditional interpretations of this text, namely that (a) Jesus was breaking the Sabbath, or (b) was perceived to be, and argue that both are inadequate. It will then proceed to offer an alternative. The approach is primarily theological. It takes a high view of biblical inspiration assuming the historical reliability of the pericopes in question and an overriding theological unity among the diverse accounts. It will not deal with historical critical questions.

1. Jesus in habitual breach of Sabbath law?

A casual reading of John 5:18 suggests that Jesus habitually broke the Sabbath (the imperfect ἔλυεν denotes continuous action) and is so interpreted by a number of commentators.[5] However, such an interpretation meets several objections. First, it does not fit the immediate context. In John 5:1-8 Jesus heals a paralytic and then tells him to pick his bed and go home. His "bed" would probably have consisted of a mat or blanket or both, on which to lie down and cover if the weather became chilly.[6] As far as the healing is concerned, nowhere does Scripture prohibit them on the

[4] Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11* (Nashville TN: B&H, 1996), 284.

[5] A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament,* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1930), 3:83 puts it thus: "He was a common and regular Sabbath-breaker"; Beasley-Murray, *John,* (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 68: "he not only used to break the Sabbath." Hermann Strathmann, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1968), 101; Ernst Haenchen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1980), 269-70; Eduard Lohse, "Σάββατον," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 7:27; Ben Witherington III, *John's Wisdom:a Commentary on the Fourth Gospel*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 384; Donald A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 247.

[6] Morris, 269. The word κράββατόν "denotes a campbed, a pallet."

Sabbath.[7] Jesus may have faced opposition regarding them but even within rabbinic Judaism they were eventually accepted as normative.[8]

What seems to offend the Jews,[9] at least initially, is that the man is carrying his bed (5:10). Jer 17:21-27 and Neh 13:15-22 contain prohibitions against carrying loads on the Sabbath.[10] However, a closer look at the context of these two OT passages indicates that the issue at hand was transporting goods to buy and sell in the market on the Sabbath. In Jeremiah this is indicated by a number of elements. The first is the noun מַשָּׂא used four times (17:21,22,24,27) and translated "load." It suggests marketable goods carried by donkeys, mules or camels.[11] The second, is the fact that the "work" of carrying is defined by the use of the noun מְלָאכָה that carries the idea of one's "occupation" or "main business."[12] Third, the repeated reference to the gates of Jerusalem (17:21,24,27) through which the loads were carried confirms that in view was the transportation goods for the market.[13]

The picture in Neh 13:15-22 is similar. Neh 13:15 reads: "In those days I saw men in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys, together with wine, grapes, figs and all

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[7] Christopher Evans, *Saint Luke* (London: SCM, 1990), 552, insightfully observes: "The Sabbath as the symbol of the refreshment and restoration of life. . . was the proper day for doing them."

[8] *t.Sab*. 5.16; *b.Yoma 85b*; *Mek*. 31:13; H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash*, (München: 1922-61), 2:487; Beasley-Murray, 109-10.

[9] Robert G. Bratcher, "The Jews in the Gospel of John" *Bible Translator 26* (Oct 1975), 401-9 suggests four possible uses of the word "Jews" in the gospel of John: (a) the whole nation of Israel; (b) residents of Jerusalem and its environs; (c) people hostile to Jesus; (d) the religious authorities in Jerusalem. In this instance the word probably refers to the religious authorities in Jerusalem.

[10] Stephen Kim, "The Christological and Eschatological Significance of Jesus' Miracle in John 5," *Biblioteca Sacra* (Oct-Dec 2008), 419, holds that "although no specific law prohibited carrying a mat on the Sabbath the Jews may have had Nehemiah 13:15 and Jeremiah 17:21-27 in mind." The Jews in question are more likely to have had rabbinic prohibitions in mind, but such prohibitions probably arose from an interpretation of texts such as these.

[11] Wilhelm Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (Oxford:Clarendon, 1979), 672.

[12] William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 196.

[13] Gerhard Hasel, "Sabbath," *Anchor Bible Dictionary,* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:852.

other kinds of loads. And they were bringing all this into Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Therefore I warned them against selling food on that day." The noun מַשָּׂא is again used (13:15), this time augmented by the nouns מֶכֶר (13:16) and מִמְכָּר (13:20) which can be translated as "merchandise"[14] and "saleable goods."[15] The idea that in view was a Sabbath market is verified by the mention of some of the goods in question, wine, grapes, figs, fish;[16] by the reference to merchants (13:20); and by the statement that the purpose of the carrying of loads was to sell them (13:15,16).[17] From a biblical perspective, therefore, there is no close parallel between the activities of the man in John 5:1-18 and the OT prohibitions of Jer 17:21-27 and Neh 13:15-22 and no breach of Sabbath was involved in the man carrying his "bed."

Indeed, Jesus does not admit culpability for the healing or the carrying of the bed but justifies his behavior on the basis that his actions are modeled on God's: "My Father is working until now, and I am also working" (John 5:17).[18] The idea here is not, as D. A. Carson suggests, that somehow as one on the level of God, Jesus is exempt from prohibitions applicable to others. Rather, the healing of the sick is redemptive work[19] and as such it can never cease.[20] John returns to this theme in 7:19-24 as the accusation

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[14] Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon with an appendix containing the biblical Aramaic*, (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 1979), 569; Holladay, 195, renders it "saleable wares."

[15] Gesenius, 569; Brown, Driver, Briggs, 569, use "sale, ware"; Holladay, 199, "something saleable".

[16] H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra-Nehemiah,* (Waco TX: 1985),395, who notes a similar problem in Amos 8:5 where merchants felt the Sabbath interfered with their profit making.

[17] Williamson, 395.

[18] Morris, 274, notes that God's people should rest on Sabbath but that rest should not take the form of idleness. Rather, the compassion of God must be reflected in compassion to others. A. Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Cambridge: University Press, 1882), long ago put it this way: "to cease to do good is not to keep the Sabbath, but to sin."

[19] John C. Brunt, *A Day for Healing*, 21-24, pointedly observes that the words σῴζω and σημεῖον used by evangelists to refer to healing miracles point to their conviction that in these miracles Jesus was no only demonstrating his power to heal but create a close connection between healing and salvation.

[20] Carson, 247-8 draws from two sources. First, according to Philo (*Leg. Alleg.* 1:5-6), God never ceased his creative work and therefore is not bound by Sabbath prohibitions applicable to humans. By associating himself with God Jesus places himself above Sabbath law. Second, according to rabbinical thought, God works but is not guilty because (a) the entire universe is his domain and therefore whatever he does is within his 'home'; and (b) God lifts nothing above his stature and therefore is not in breach of Sabbath law when he works. See also Willy Rordorf, *Sunday, the History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church*, (London: SCM, 1968), 98. The concept of God

for the healing resurfaces (7:21). Jesus replies that according to Mosaic Law a person can be circumcised on the Sabbath (7:22). Circumcision meant entry into a covenant relationship with God and was therefore an act of wholeness.[21] His act of healing is also an act of salvation, even greater than circumcision (ὅλον ἄνθρωπον ὑγιῆ ἐποίησα),[22] and therefore permissible on the Sabbath.[23] Jesus concludes his defense with the statement: "Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment" (John 7:24).[24]

According to rabbinic tradition the act of carrying the bed could constitute a Sabbath violation (see discussion below). However, in the gospel traditions Jesus is not morally bound by rabbinic casuistry; if anything his attitude is often antagonistic. Forms of the noun παράδοσις appear eight times in two pericopes in the gospels[25] always in a context of conflict where Jesus defends his disciples on breaches of Jewish tradition. Twice the teachings of the scribes are called ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων and are juxtaposed with the law of God.[26] Verb and related noun forms of

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continuing without ceasing his creative work is incompatible with Johannine theology which declares "through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that was made" (3:3). In this verse the aorist ἐγένετο is used twice and the perfect γέγονεν once and all suggest completed action. Bacchiocchi, 42-43, more correctly notes that in John 5:17 the works of God parallel the works of Jesus who is not involved in creative but redemptive activity. He cites related or parallel sayings in the gospel of John (5:36; 6:29; 9:4; 10:37-8; 14:11; 15:24). That works of salvation are implied is confirmed beyond doubt by the follow up controversy of John 7:19-24 where Jesus compares his Sabbath healing to circumcision, a sign of entry into the covenant of God and clearly, therefore, a mark of salvation. See also Walter Specht, "The Sabbath in the New Testament," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, Kenneth A. Strand, ed., (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 100-101.

[21] Specht, 101, points to the saying of rabbi Jose (*m. Ned.* 3.11) that circumcision is of such importance that it can override the Sabbath.

[22] Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament vol 4, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 234.

[23] Borchert, 285: "in referring to the practise of circumcision here Jesus employed a Jewish casuistic method of argument to prove that he was not actually breaking the law."

[24] Brunt, 46-54, observes that none of the healing miracles involved "*acute* cases of illness" (emphasis his) and as such would have been an especially strong challenge to Pharisaic norms. The meaning Jesus was trying to give was (a) "not a day for legalistic rules and rituals" (p. 47); and (b) the concepts of Sabbath, healing and salvation are very closely intertwined.

[25] Matt 15:2, 3, 6; Mark 7:3, 5, 8, 9, 14.

[26] Mark 7:7; 15:9.

ὑποκρίνομαι are used repeatedly always in relation to the expositors of Jewish law[27] evidence that their approach was considered problematic.
In light of the above, it would be unusual for John to conclude the incident of the healing of the paralytic by stating that Jesus "was breaking the Sabbath" when his viewpoint perceives no such breach.

A second problem with the interpretation of John 5:18 that presents Jesus as a Sabbath breaker is that evidence to that effect is lacking not only from the immediate but also from the broader Sabbath context of the gospels. In each of the Sabbath conflicts recorded by the evangelists an accusation is presented against Jesus and/or the disciples only to be debunked.

When the Pharisees accuse the disciples[28] of picking and eating heads of corn on the Sabbath (Matt 12:1-2), Jesus does not concede the point. Rather, he justifies the disciples on the basis of OT practice (Matt 12:3-5).[29] Indeed, he then proceeds to make a statement on appropriate Sabbath behavior (Matt 12:12), which verifies respect for this biblical institution.[30] He concludes by declaring the disciples ἀναιτίους – those who have given no offense.[31] In Mark 3:1-6[32] the Pharisees watch Jesus to see if he will heal a man on the Sabbath. Jesus preempts them by asking whether good works of healing are lawful on the Sabbath, but they remain quiet. Jesus performs

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[27] Matt 6:2, 5, 16; 7:5; 15:7; 22:18; 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29; 24:51; Mark 7:6; 12:15; Luke 6:42; 12:1,56; 13:15; 20:20.

[28] Donald Hanger, *Matthew 1-13*, (Waco Tx: Word, 1993), 328, correctly notes that though Jesus was not directly accused indirectly he was since he bore responsibility for his disciples' conduct.

[29] Hagner, 329, hesitantly notes "it is possible to regard their activity as a violation of the Torah commandment itself" and cites Ex. 34:21, 20:10 and Deut. 5:14 all of which prohibit labor (עָבַד). It is hard to see how the casual plucking and eating of corn could fall under these prohibitions, something highlighted by the fact that only "some" of the bystanders take offense (Luke 6:2).

[30] Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 354: "Matthew contends that Jesus' ethics reflect a more biblically sensitive approach than those of his opponents."

[31] Cf. Mark 2:23-28 and Luke 6:1-5. Mark does not declare the disciples ἀναιτίους but justifies them nonetheless on the basis of OT precedent and on the basis of the statement that Sabbath law was given for the benefit of man (τὸ σάββατον διὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐγένετο) and therefore their action is legitimate since the disciples are in need, they are hungry. Luke follows Mark in justifying the disciples on the basis of OT precedent but lacks his reference to the beneficial nature of the created Sabbath and Matthew's verdict ἀναιτίους.

[32] Cf. Matt 12:9-14; Luke 6:6-11.

the healing. He feels "angry" and "deeply distressed"[33] because they have failed to understand the true function of Sabbath law (Mark 2:27). They in turn leave his presence and plot to kill him (Mark 3:6).

In Luke 13:10-17 Jesus is accused of violating the Sabbath for healing a crippled woman. His reply indicates that there is nothing wrong with his activity, but rather with the manner in which his accusers have understood Sabbath law:[34] "The Lord answered him, 'You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?'" (Luke 13:15-16). In Luke 14:1-6 there is similar encounter when Jesus heals a man with dropsy. This incident lacks the drama of Mark 3:1-6 but Jesus justifies his healing on a similar basis, namely that acts of healing are perfectly in harmony with and permissible on the Sabbath.

Finally, John 9:1-41 records the healing of a man blind from birth. This is the last Sabbath controversy in the gospels. The Pharisees accuse Jesus again of breach of the Sabbath but not in his presence. John's verdict of whether any culpability is in view is given in two statements. First, when the healed man is brought to the Sanhedrin and told that the person who healed him is a sinner, he replies: "We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will" (John 9:31). John thus uses the man's words to confirm Jesus' innocence.[35] Second, when Jesus later meets the man and reveals himself as the Son of God, he pronounces a verdict on his accusers: "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind" (John 9:39). Here two kinds of people are contrasted. First, there are those like the blind man whose eyes have been opened both physically through the

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[33] Mark 3:5: μετ' ὀργῆς and συλλυπούμενος respectively. Guelich, 137, renders συλλυπούμενος as 'deeply grieved.' Furthermore, he states that Jesus perceives the silence of his opponents as evidence of culpability and that their response is reminiscent of Israel's response to the messages of the prophets and cites Jer. 3:17; 7:24; 9:13; 11:18; 13:10; 16:12; Ps. 81:13; Deut. 29:18.

[34] David L. Tiede, *Luke,* (Minneapolis MN: Zondervan, 1988), 250, correctly points out that Jesus was not predisposed against the synagogue ruler since in 8:41 he responded favorably to another ruler's request. What calls his sharp rebuke is the synagogue ruler's Sabbath misconceptions.

[35] Borchert, 323, opines that John's record of the man's words confirm the testimony "that the healer must be a God-authenticated person."

healing, and spiritually as he recognizes and worships Jesus. Then there are his accusers who though their physical eyes are intact, they are spiritually blind as exemplified by their opposition to Jesus and their accusations.[36]

The broader gospel context therefore depicts Jesus and the disciples as innocent in relation to Sabbath law. In light of this, it would be strange for John to completely reverse this picture and declare Jesus to be a habitual Sabbath breaker in John 5:18. Such an interpretation goes against the grain of all other Sabbath incidents.

A third problem with traditional translations/interpretations of John 5:18 is that they contradict clear gospel statements where Jesus is presented as an upholder of Bible law. Such statements are especially numerous in the Synoptic gospels. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus declares: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matt 5:17-18).[37] The Lukan version is equally emphatic: "It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law" (Luke 16:17). In Matthew, whoever breaks a commandment or teaches others to do so, will have no place in the kingdom (Matt 5:18).[38] To the rich young ruler Jesus says: "If you want to enter life, obey the commandments" (Matt 19:17),[39] while in the Markan (Mark 10:19) and Lukan versions (Luke 18:20) Jesus quotes five of the Ten Commandments. In one instance Jesus juxtaposes the 5th commandment with rabbinic traditions upholding the former and condemning the latter in the strongest possible language (Mark 7:1-12; Matt 15:1-9) and concludes: "Thus you

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[36] Witherington, 185, goes a step further and declares those whose physical eyes are intact but are spiritually deficient as worse than blind. Their attitude is one of "deliberate spiritual perversity or obtuseness."

[37] Hagner, 106, calls this "a further and more forceful statement that Jesus has not come to destroy the law." Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew,* (Atlanta GA: John Know, 1975), 106: "The evangelist. . . emphasizes the permanence of the Law."

[38] Schweizer, 105: "What is meant is. . . in fact exclusion from it." See also Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 52; Hagner, 109.

[39] Schnackenburg, 188, writes: "The perfection. . . demanded of all Christ's disciples leaves the commandments of the Decalogue intact."

nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that" (Mark 7:13).[40]

John is not as forthright in highlighting Jesus' positive relation to the law, yet the evidence is there. During his last meal with the disciples before the crucifixion, Jesus asserts: "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love" (John 15:10).[41] And when in John 10:31-42 the Jews take up stones to stone him, Jesus interjects that he has done nothing that could call such a sentence upon him. In light of such strong affirmations of Jesus' respect for biblical law it would be highly contradictory for John to assert in 5:18 that Jesus habitually broke the Sabbath.

Finally, if the desire of the Jews to kill Jesus stemmed primarily from Jesus' supposed disregard for the Sabbath, it is surprising that no such accusation was brought against him during His trial. This is the more surprising since his prosecutors were hard pressed to find an excuse to condemn Him (Matt 26:59-60). The fact that no Sabbath violation charges were brought indicates that no such charges could have been substantiated.

2. Jesus in *perceived* habitual breach of Sabbath law?

Given the limitations of the first interpretation, some commentators suggest an alternative understanding of John 5:18; namely that while Jesus respected the biblical Sabbath, he was in breach of halakhic traditions regarding it.[42] In this way, Jesus is absolved of violating a biblical commandment, or of contradictory teaching and practice, and his defense of his Sabbath actions on the basis of OT injunctions is upheld; yet his perceived violations still explain why the Jews wanted to kill Him.

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[40] Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:36*, (Waco TX: Word Books, 1989), 370: "From 'neglecting' (7:8) to 'nullifying' (7:9) to 'annulling'. . . the charge that 'tradition,' 'your tradition'. . . contravenes God's commandment, God's word. . . is now complete."

[41] J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, (London: T & T Clark, 1999), 484, notes that "no man could state with such complete assurance" the assertion that Jesus made that he had kept God's commandments.

[42] E.g. Wilfred Scott, "Sabbath," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 3:409; *SDA Bible Commentary*, (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 5:950-1; Samuele Bacchiocchi , *From Sabbath to Sunday*, (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977), 46.

The discussion so far highlighted all these points and therefore this interpretation seems to fit the evidence better.[43] This notwithstanding, the question that still needs to be asked is: does John 5:18 aim to state that the leaders of Israel wanted to kill Jesus because they perceived he broke the Sabbath? I somehow doubt it. First, John 5:18 does not state that Jesus was "*perceived as* breaking the Sabbath," but rather Jesus "was breaking the Sabbath." To facilitate the interpretation that Jesus was victimized only because of perceived violations would require us to read into John 5:18 something that is not there, at least not in an obvious way.

Second, it is doubtful Jews would want to kill someone for infringing on rabbinic interpretation. The time of Jesus was a fluid period in Judaism and opinions on Sabbath observance and other issues varied. The Pharisaic schools of Hillel and Shammai, the Sadducees, Zealots and Essenes all promoted different views. Hillelite casuistry eventually did become normative but only after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This fluidity is evident in the gospels. In Mark 1:21-26 Jesus sets a man free from demon possession during the Sabbath. Nobody objects to this act; rather the people are "amazed" at His power and spread the news throughout Galilee (Mark 1:27-28).[44] In Luke 13:10-17 Jesus heals a woman during a synagogue meeting. The synagogue ruler becomes indignant and asks the people to seek healing outside the Sabbath hours (Luke 13:14). Some take his side but the majority are "delighted with all the wonderful things he [Jesus] was doing" (Luke 13:17). In Luke 14:1-6, during a meal with Pharisees, Jesus asks whether it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath (Luke 14:3). The Pharisees want to say "no" (Luke 14:6), but find no way to substantiate an objection and remain quiet while Jesus performs the healing. In Mark 1:32 the crowds hesitate to seek healing on the Sabbath and wait until sunset to bring their sick to Jesus. Obviously, there was no consensus regarding Sabbath healings.

Another example of the fluidity of views on Sabbath observance is Luke 6:1-5 where the disciples pick and eat heads of corn while walking through a field on the Sabbath. A controversy ensues, yet it is often overlooked that only *some* (τινὲς) of the Pharisees accused the disciples of

[43] Borchert, 288: "Not only in John but also in the Synoptics is Jesus portrayed as seemingly unconcerned for the rabbinic traditions about the Sabbath." Morris, 271, adds with regard to John 5:18: "Jesus' act of compassion had not been inhibited because there were scribal regulations forbidding works of healing on that day."

[44] Guelich, 58.

breaking the Sabbath (Luke 6:2). Clearly, for other Pharisees present and non-Pharisees, the actions of the disciples did not constitute a violation of the Sabbath.

In John a similar fluidity is evident. In John 7:21-24, 40-41, when Jesus justifies a Sabbath healing through parallel to Sabbath circumcision the audience begins to wonder whether he indeed is the Messiah. In John 9 after the healing of the blind man there is discussion among the Pharisees. Some disregard the healing on the basis that Jesus has violated the Sabbath; but others do not see any infringement and justify Jesus on the basis that if he had sinned God would not have performed the miracle. John's conclusion fits the overall picture: "so they were divided" (9:16).[45]

This fluidity is also obvious in the Mishnah and, more so, the Babylonian Talmud which record long discussions on proper Sabbath behavior, including the carrying of objects. The Mishnah (*m.Shab* 7.2) considers the transferring of an object from one premise to another as one of the 39 main classes of work (*avot*) prohibited on the Sabbath.[46] The exact definition of what was allowed to be carried varied. Animal fodder (*m.Shab* 7.4), food for humans (*m.Shab* 7.5; 8.1; 10.4) and articles that might be related to professional work (*m.Shab* 8.2-5) where hotly debated issues and strict principles applied. With regards to the carrying of other objects the Mishnah states: "If one carries out [an article], whether with his right or with his left [hand], in his lap or on his shoulder, he is culpable" on the basis that the sons of Kehath carried their burdens in such manner (*m.Shab* 10.3). Other forms of carrying were allowed. Rabbi Eleazar (2nd century AD) limited culpability to items carried at ten hand breaths height or above the head (*b.Shab* 92a), while there was debate about items carried on the head (*b.Shab* 92a; 92b). Punishment for such Sabbath offenses was a sin offering, not a death penalty.

In light of the above, the man carrying his bed could be considered innocent with regards to biblical law and certain strands of halakhic tradition, but guilty according to others. It is evident therefore that within Judaism different approaches existed regarding Sabbath observance. This

[45] Cf. Bernard, 332 who also points to 6:52; 7:12, 43; 10:19 for similar examples of division.

[46] For an insight into rabbinic Sabbath traditions see the tractate "Sabbath" in the *Mishnah* and *Babylonian Talmud* which list 39 main prohibitions including carrying loads on Sabbath, but which, albeit, ante-dates the gospels substantially; also Strack-Billerbeck's lengthy discussion in, 2:454-61.

explains why no legal charges on Sabbath observance were brought against Jesus or the people around him–there was no consistent standard.[47] The suggestion therefore that the Jews wanted to kill Jesus because of breaches of Sabbath tradition looks doubtful.

To summarize the discussion so far, a casual reading of John 5:18 may suggest that Jesus habitually broke the Sabbath prompting the Jews to want to kill him. We saw, however, that such an interpretation cannot stand because: (a) it does not fit the immediate context of John 5 where there is no evidence of Sabbath violation; (b) it does not fit the broader context where in all Sabbath controversies all evangelists uphold the innocence of Jesus and the disciples; (c) it would imply a contradiction between Jesus' calls to obedience to the Torah and his own disobedience; (d) it begs the question, why didn't the Jews use his supposed Sabbath breaking as evidence against him in his trial. An alternative interpretation is to suggest that the Jews wanted to kill Jesus because of *perceived* Sabbath violations. This approach, while in harmony to gospel evidence does not seem to bring out the full weight of John 5:18 because: (a) it requires that we read into the text something that is not there; (b) it is unlikely that a breach of Sabbath tradition would prompt such a response because there was no consensus as to what constituted proper Sabbath observance. The two traditional interpretations of John 5:18 are inadequate. Is there a viable alternative?

3. An Alternative Interpretation

The verb "breaking" in John 5:18 translates the Greek ἔλυεν from the root λύω. It can have a variety of shades of meaning but a primary one is to "untie, release, set free."[48] If such a shade is preferred the text could be translated as follows:

> For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him [Jesus]; *not only was he setting the Sabbath free* [from human casuistry], but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Is this a viable translation? To test it we will apply three tests: lexical definition, context and insights into the motives of Jesus' opponents.

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[47] The young man in John 9 who was cast out of the synagogue was not punished for washing on the Sabbath but for defending Jesus before the leaders of Israel.

[48] Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1889), 481-2.

Lexically, the suggested translation seems not only viable but preferable. Liddell and Scott, apart from "untie, release, set free" also use "loosen," "redeem."[49] BDAG defines it as follows: "to undo something that is used to tie up or constrain something," to "loose, untie"; "to set free something tied or similarly constrained."[50] Vine, in his theological dictionary gives the following primary definition: "to loosen, especially by way of deliverance."[51] Thayer: "to loose any person (or thing) tied or fastened."[52] For the Septuagint use of the verb Lust, Eynikel and Hauspie define it as, "to loose, untie, unbind, unfasten, open."[53] For early patristic use Lampe opts for the verbs "loose, release."[54] The primary nuance, as defined by all respectable lexicons, would be in harmony with my suggested translation.[55]

As secondary nuances λύω can mean to dissolve,[56] "resolve a whole into its parts, dissolve, breakup,"[57] "break down, destroy, bring to an end,"[58] "resolve a whole into its parts: loosen, dissolve, break up, destroy."[59] BDAG opts for "abolish" in John 5:18.[60] Thomas Green renders λύω in John 5:18 as "infringe." Moulton translates ἔλυεν τὸ σάββατον as "breaking the Sabbath" and parallels it with λύειν τὰ πένθη, "to go out of mourning."[61] All other considerations being equal the exegete/translator should opt for a primary nuance of any given word. As such, on lexical evidence alone, the translation suggested here is a preferable option.

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[49] Liddell and Scott, 481-2.

[50] Walter Bauer, W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, (BDAG), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 606.

[51] W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words With Their Precise Meaning for English Readers*, (Westwood NJ: Revell, 1962), 194.

[52] Joseph H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1977), 384.

[53] J. Lust, E. Eynikel, K. Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, (Stuttgard: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1992),

[54] G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), 817.

[55] Kim, 417: "Through the excessive and restrictive legislation of the rabbis on how to observe this holy day, the Sabbath became a burden."

[56] Thayer, 384, Lampe 817.

[57] Danker, 606.

[58] Lust, 286.

[59] G. Abbot-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Edinburgh: 1981), 274.

[60] BDAG, 607.

[61] J. H. Moulton, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, (Grand Rapids MI: 1976), 384.

Confirming the choice of a positive nuance is the common use of λύω as a technical term. Büchsel notes that the terms δέω και λύω were rabbinic expressions meaning to declare things forbidden or permitted.[62] A. T. Robertson adds: "To 'bind' in rabbinical language is to forbid, to 'loose' is to permit. . . Rabbis of the school of Hillel 'loosed' many things that the school of Schammai 'bound'."[63] If we apply such a use to John 5:18 the resultant implication is that Jesus was setting the Sabbath free from rabbinic casuistry, "unbinding" tedious human prohibitions, and that in doing so he was moving within the sphere of his rights as a teacher of the law. Is there evidence that in his Sabbath activities Jesus was liberating the Sabbath from rabbinic casuistry and at the same time making pronouncements on proper Sabbath behavior?

The evidence from the broader context of the seven Sabbath controversies answers the question in the affirmative. In the incident in the field of corn Jesus first defends his disciples and then pronounces a defining principle on Sabbath observance: "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).[64] The idea here is that the purpose of the Sabbath is to safeguard human wellbeing. Activities in harmony with this principle are valid.[65] He then declares the authority on which his pronouncement and actions stand: "So the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28). Matthew drops Mark's first statement but in its place adds the phrase: "If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent" (Matt 12:7).[66] The implication is that the accusers have failed to show mercy to the hungry disciples and therefore stand themselves accused. Luke retains only the statement about the Son of Man's lordship over the Sabbath. Clearly, in all three accounts the evangelists depict Jesus as a person with

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[62] Friedrich Büchsel, δέω (λύω)' *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:60. He also notes that the words were used in the context of magic in the sense of binding and loose spells but clearly the gospel usages do not fall under this category.

[63] Robertson, 1:134.

[64] Guelich, 124: "The Sabbath as a part of creation must be taken seriously and not lightly dismissed."

[65] Guelich, 125, notes that the notion that the Sabbath was given for the benefit of humanity was in harmony with rabbinic interpretation and cites Jub. 2.

[66] Hagner, 327, pronounces Jesus "the true interpreter of the Sabbath commandment."

spiritual authority who rejects traditional interpretation and defines himself appropriate Sabbath behavior.[67]

In the Sabbath controversy of the healing of the man with the withered hand Mark and Luke record that before Jesus heals him he asks him to "stand in front of everyone" (Mark 3:3; Luke 6:8). Jesus does so only after he has perceived that certain men are questioning the legality of Sabbath healings. By asking the sick man to stand Jesus is not only interested in healing the man, but more importantly in demonstrating that to do so is fully within the spirit of the Sabbath. Keener correctly points that here Jesus "reasons from the law itself."[68] As such, even as the man stands Jesus asks a rhetorical question concerning what is lawful on the Sabbath.[69] In Matthew's account Jesus answers his own question by stating "therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."[70]

In the incident of the healing of the crippled woman Jesus calls those who object to Sabbath healings "hypocrites" (Luke 13:15) because they seem to have greater concern for thirsty cattle than for suffering people.[71] Jesus performs the healing and in this way demonstrates that such inhibitions on Sabbath healings are not only unjustified but the result of corrupt thinking. In the incident of the healing of the man with dropsy Jesus asks Pharisees whether it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath (Luke 14:3). Tiede observes that we know next to nothing about the man and the severity of his condition, or indeed how he responded at the end of the episode.[72] It seems that Luke's main concern is not the healing itself but the Sabbath context and the legality of the act. To Jesus' question the Pharisees choose not to respond because. As Pate puts it, they are silenced.[73] Jesus proceeds

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[67] Schnackenburg, 112, maintains that the evangelist is here "profiling Jesus as the perfect observer of the will of God in the Old Testament."

[68] Keener, 358. He further notes that in contrast to Essenes, Pharisees and most Jews would rescue animals on the Sabbath and cites b. Shab. 128b.

[69] *m.Shab*. 5.1-4; 7.2; 15.1-2; *m.Erub*. 2.1-4 allow untying an ox or ass from the trough to lead the animal to drink water.

[70] Hagner, 334: "Again Jesus challenges not the Sabbath law itself but the interpretation of the law."

[71] Tiede, 250-1, points out that the discussion follows rabbinic and Qumran discussions about how strictly Sabbath law was to be observed in the case of domestic animals. Only the most rigid would object to the untying of an animal on Sabbath. Jesus therefore justifies his actions on the basis of rabbinic precedent arguing from the lesser to the greater.

[72] Tiede 262.

[73] Marvin C. Pate, *Luke*, (Chicago IL: Moody, 1995), 294.

to heal the man indicating that, according to him, it is perfectly lawful to heal on the Sabbath. His interest is to demonstrate what is legal.

In John 7:23 when accused of healing on the Sabbath, Jesus compares the healing to circumcision and declares that those who oppose him look at appearances but fail to see the essence. The implication is, of course, that in essence a healing on the Sabbath is fully in harmony with Sabbath law. In John 9:41, after another Sabbath healing and ensuing controversy, Jesus goes so far as to suggest that opposition to acts of kindness on the Sabbath is tantamount to sin! The very regulations that rabbis have applied to protect the Sabbath are leading to spiritual darkness and therefore breach the Sabbath!

Jesus authority to bind and loose in a legal context is also easily demonstrated by other gospel references. A clear example is the use of the form ἔξεστιν from the root ἔξειμι literally 'to go out' but in the form ἔξεστιν denoting what is and is not permissible.[74] The form appears 28 times in the NT of which 21 are in the gospels.[75] Of the gospel occurrences 11 times the word is used in the context of the Sabbath, four times by accusers and seven times by Jesus himself. Another ten times the word is used in relation to other legal matters, five of which by Jesus. Beyond the use of ἔξεστιν a significant portion of the Sermon on the Mount concerns legal pronouncements by Jesus juxtaposed with rabbinic tradition (Matt 5:21-28). And to cap it all, Jesus gave the disciples authority to bind and loose (Matt 16:19; 18:18). He could hardly pass on such authority if he did not presume to posses it himself. It is clear therefore that the gospels depict Jesus as a person who has the authority to make legal pronouncements on questions of religious practice.

Summing up the evidence in all Sabbath controversies recorded in the gospels Jesus brushes asides rabbinic inhibitions and takes the prerogative to define what is and is not appropriate Sabbath behavior. To use the rabbinic technical terms, he is both binding and loosing, but primarily loosing.

Finally, translating λύω in its primary sense "set free" in John 5:18 brings to light the true motives of those who wanted to kill Jesus. According to the gospel accounts the opponents of Jesus wanted to kill him

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[74] Liddell and Scott, 589, 592.

[75] Matt 12:2, 10, 12; 14:4; 19:3; 20:15; 22:17; 27:6; Mark 2:24, 26; 3:4; 6:18; 10:2; 12:14; Luke 6:2, 4, 9; 14:3; 20:22; John 5:10; 18:31 are the gospel references and Acts 16:21; 21:37; 22:25; 1 Cor 6:12 (twice); 10:23 (twice) are the other NT references.

on a number of occasions. In John 11:51 the chief priests want to kill him because the miracles he performs and his teaching lead people to follow him, something that was perceived as a danger to the nation (11:48). John sees in the statement an unintentional prophecy about the death of the innocent person on behalf of the whole nation. In John 8:37 and 40 Jews, probably Pharisees, and scribes (8:3), want to kill him after a theological confrontation. The text suggests that the real reason is not the theological disagreement as such, but because they follow in the footsteps of the arch murderer, the devil (8:44). In Mark 11:18 (cf. Luke 19:47) the chief priests and teachers of the law unite in their desire to kill Jesus because "they feared him" and his influence over the people.

In Mark 3:6 (cf. Matt 12:14) after the incident of the healing of the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, the Pharisees want to kill him. The real reason is not any disagreement over the Sabbath. This is evident by the fact that the Pharisees are joined in their plotting by the Herodians who would not have been as scrupulous in their Sabbath keeping,[76] or necessarily in theological agreement with the Pharisees.[77] Finally, in John 7:1-25 the desire to kill Jesus does not stem from one incident but seems a comprehensive response to his ministry. The common thread that runs throughout these pericopes is fear. Jesus is perceived as a challenge and a threat to the established order and therefore his opponents want him removed. So much so, that when Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, they desire to kill him too (John 12:10).

Summing the evidence and the argument on the motives of those who wanted to kill Jesus we can say the following with regards to John 5:18. If his opponents wanted to kill Jesus because he was breaking the Sabbath (first interpretation), then these leaders become the defendants of the biblical Sabbath; if they wanted to kill Jesus because of *perceived* Sabbath violations, then they are still justified because though misguided, their motives to defend the faith as they perceive it are still pure. However, if we understand that the opponents wanted to kill Jesus because his binding and

[76] Defining the identity of the Herodians has been problematic. H. H. Rowley, "The Herodians in the Gospels," *Journal of Theological Studies* 41 (1940), 14-27, offered eleven different possibilities. C. Daniel, 'Nouveaux arguments en faveour de l'identification des Hérodiens et des Esséniens,' *RevQ* 27 (1970), 397-402 associates the Herodians with the Essenes. More recent scholarship tends to see them as a politically influential aristocracy under the rule of Herod Antipas, the political powers of Galilee. So Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, (Freiburg: Herder, 1991), 225; Guelich, 138-9.

[77] Guelich, 139 calls the common plot of the two groups, a "strange cooperation."

loosing on religious questions including the Sabbath (our alternative interpretation), and his influence over the people was perceived as a threat, then the picture becomes clearer. His enemies were not concerned with minute interpretation of Sabbath law, on themselves were not in agreement, but with the fact that this person was undermining the established religious order.

Synopsis

Having discarded the two traditional interpretations on John 5:18 as inadequate, I have suggested that this text should be translated according to the primary meaning of the verb λύω to read that Jesus was setting the Sabbath free. This rendering is linguistically and contextually preferable given the primary nuance of λύω, and its use as a technical rabbinic term for making religious legal pronouncements; and given the agreement of the Synoptics and John that in the Sabbath controversies Jesus assumes the authority to bind and, more importantly, loose. It also brings into right focus the selfish motives of his enemies who wanted to kill him.

I believe that thus properly translated and understood John 5:18 encapsulates the essence of Jesus' relation to the Sabbath. He did not work to destroy it–how could he when He declared that until heaven and earth pass away, the law will still stand. He did not go around disregarding it–how could he when he elsewhere upheld the Ten Commandments. But he set out to set it free from misplaced casuistry and place it in a more positive perspective so that it could indeed be a delight as biblically intended (Isaiah 58:13).

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